

FÂṬIMA, DAUGHTER OF MUḤAMMAD

Second Edition



Christopher Paul Clohessy

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Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad



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Christopher Paul Clohessy



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PREFACE

It was in the course of researching the martyrdom of al-Husayn that I happened across the vague and shadowy figure of Fâtima, his mother. Aside from a few pamphlets from Iran, and a selection of articles in Islamic periodicals, I could find almost nothing substantial written about this last-surviving daughter of Muhammad and wife of ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib, Muhammad’s cousin and early companion. At first glance, the Arabic texts of Sunnî Islam contained only passing references to her life and death, and few of these were particularly flattering. But when I began to examine some of the Shî‘a texts, two things became patently clear: the first was that the Fâtima presented by the scholars and writers of Shî‘a Islam was significantly dissimilar to the indistinct figure of their Sunnî counterparts. The second was the remarkable similarities between the Fâtima of Shî‘a Islam and the Mary of Catholicism. I wondered how such vast Sunnî-Shî‘a discrepancies could be reconciled, and whether a comparative study of Mary and Fâtima would yield any clue to the immense power these two women hold for their adherents. So it was that I abandoned al-Husayn – at least temporarily – and spent the next three years unearthing Fâtima from the Sunnî and Shî‘a texts in the hope of giving her a more prominent place on the stage of Islamic history. This book is the result.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations of the Arabic texts are my own. Except when quoting from other works, all dates are given according to the Islamic calendar (*hijra*), followed by a backslash and the Gregorian equivalent.

Christopher Clohessy
July 2009

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	al-Astarâbâdhî (d. after 946/1538) in his <i>Ta'wîl al-âyat al-bâhira fî fadl al-itra al-tâhira</i> .
ADD	Abû Dâwûd (d. 275/889) in his <i>Sunan</i> .
AML	al-Âmilî (d. 877/1472) in his <i>al-Sirât al-mustaqîm ilâ mustabaqq al-taqdîm fî al-imâma</i> .
AHS	al-Ahsâ'î (d. 878/1473) in his <i>'Awâli al-la'âlî' al-'azîziyya fî al-abâdîth al-dîniyya</i> .
AKR	Ibn 'Asâkir (d. 571/1176) in his <i>Ta'rîkh madînat Dî-mashq</i> .
ATH ¹	Ibn al-Athîr (d. 630/1233) in his <i>al-Kâmil fî al-ta'rîkh</i> .
ATH ²	Ibn al-Athîr in his <i>Usd al-ghâba fî ma'rîfat al-sahâba</i> .
AYY	al-'Ayyâshî (d. 401/1009) in his <i>Tafsîr al-'Ayyâshî</i> .
BDW	al-Baydâwî (d. 685/1286) in his <i>Anwâr al-tanzîl wa-asrâr al-ta'wîl</i> .
BGD	al-Baghdâdî (d. 463/1071) in his <i>Ta'rîkh Baghdâd</i> .
BHR	al-Bahrânî (d. 1107/1695) in his <i>al-Burbân fî tafsîr al-qur'ân</i> .
BLD ¹	al-Balâdhurî (d. 279/892) in his <i>Kitâb ansâb al-ashraf</i> .
BLD ²	al-Balâdhurî in his <i>Kitâb futûh al-buldân</i> .
BRR	Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071) in his <i>al-Istî'âb fî ma'rîfat al-ashâb</i> .
BTQ	Ibn al-Bitrîq (d. 600/1203) in his <i>al-'Umda fî 'uyûn al-akhbâr fî manâqib amîr al-mu'minîn</i> .
BUK ¹	al-Bukhârî (d. 256/870) in his <i>Sahîh</i> .
BUK ²	al-Bukhârî in his <i>al-Adab al-mufrad</i> .
DAY	al-Daylamî (c. 7 TH /8 TH century) in his <i>Irsbâd al-qulûb</i> .
DHB ¹	al-Dhahabî (d. 748/1348) in his <i>al-'Ibar fî akhbâr al-bashar muntakhab al-ta'rîkh al-kabîr</i> .
DHB ²	al-Dhahabî in his <i>Mîzân al-i'tidâl fî tarâjim al-rijâl</i> .
DRM	al-Dârimî (d. 255/869) in his <i>Sunan</i> .

- FNR al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî (c. mid-5TH/11TH century) in his *Rawdat al-wâ'izîn wa-tabsirat al-mutta'izîn*.
- FRT Furât b Ibrâhîm b. Furât al-Kûfî (d. 310/992) in his *Tafsîr Furât b. Ibrâhîm*.
- HAY al-Haythamî (d. 973/1565) in his *Majma' al-ṣawâ'id wa-manba' al-fawâ'id*.
- HDI Ibn al-Hadîd (d. 655/1257) in his *Sharkh nahj al-balâgha*.
- HLL¹ al-Hillî al-ʿAllâma (d. 726/1325) in his *Nahj al-haqq wa-kashf al-sidq*.
- HLL² al-Hillî al-ʿAllâma in his *Kashf al-yaqîn fî fadâ'il amîr al-mu'minîn*.
- HNA al-Hâkim al-Nisâbûrî (d. 404/914) in his *Kitâb (Talkhîs) al-mustadrak ʿalâ al-sahîhayn*.
- HNB Ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855) in his *Musnad*.
- HRR¹ al-Hurr al-ʿÂmilî (d. 1099/1688) in his *Tafsîl wasâ'il al-shi'a*.
- HRR² al-Hurr al-ʿÂmilî in his *al-Jawâhir al-saniyya al-abâdîth al-qudsiyya*.
- HSB Ibn Hishâm (d. 218/834) in his *Sîrat Muḥammad Rasûl Allâh*.
- IRB al-Irbîlî (692/1293) in his *Kashf al-ghumma fî ma'rifat al-a'imma*.
- ISH al-Isbahânî (or al-Isfahânî) (d. 430/1038) in his *Hîyat al-awliyâ' wa-tabaqât al-asfiyâ'*.
- ISM al-ʿIsâmî (d. 1111/1699) in his *Simt al-nujûm al-ʿawâlî*.
- JQM Shâdhân b. Jibrîl al-Qummî (n.d.) in his *al-Fadâ'il*.
- JWZ¹ Ibn al-Jawzî (d. 597/1200) in his *Kitâb al-mawdû'ât min al-abâdîth al-marfû'a*.
- JWZ² Ibn al-Jawzî in his *Sîfat al-safwa*.
- KFI al-Kûfî (c. mid-4TH/10TH century) in his *al-Ash'athîyyât*.
- KFM¹ al-Ka'fâmî (895 or 905/1498) in his *Kitâb al-misbâh*.
- KFM² al-Ka'fâmî in his *al-Balad al-amîn*.
- KLY al-Kulaynî (d. 328/939) in his *al-Kâfî fî 'ilm al-dîn*.
- KTR¹ Ibn Kathîr (d. 774/1373) in his *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*.
- KTR² Ibn Kathîr in his *Tafsîr al-qur'ân*.
- KWZ al-Khawârizmî (d. 568/1172) in his *Maqṭal al-Husayn*.
- MFD¹ al-Mufîd (d. 413/1022) in his *al-Irsbâd fî ma'rifat hujaj Allâh ʿalâ al-'ibâd*.
- MFD² al-Mufîd in his *al-Ikhtisâs*.

MFD ³	al-Mufid in his <i>al-Iḥṣāb fī al-imāma</i> .
MFD ⁴	al-Mufid in his <i>al-Fuṣūl al-mukhtāra</i> .
MFD ⁵	al-Mufid in his <i>al-Amālī li-l-Mufīd</i> .
MJA	Ibn Māja (d. 273/886) in his <i>Sunan</i> .
MJL	al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1700) in his <i>Bihār al-anwār</i> .
MSD	al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956) in his <i>Murāj al-dhahab</i> .
MSL	Muslim (d. 261/875) in his <i>Sahīb</i> .
MTQ	al-Muttaqī al-Hindī (d. c. 977/1569) in his <i>Muntakhab kanẓ al-ʿummāl</i> .
MZZ	al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341) in <i>Tabdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl</i> .
NJA	al-Najāshī (d. 450/1085) in his <i>Kitāb asmāʾ al-rijāl</i> .
NSA ¹	al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915) in his <i>al-Sunan al-kubrā</i> .
NSA ²	al-Nasāʾī in his <i>Kitāb al-khasāʾis fī fadl ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib</i> .
NTR	al-Tabarsī (d. 1320/1902) in his <i>Khātimat mustadrak al-nasāʾil</i> .
NUM	al-Nuʿmānī (4 TH /10 TH century) in his <i>Ghaybat al-Nuʿmānī</i> .
QHL	al-Hilālī (d. c. 80/662) in his <i>Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays</i> .
QID	Qādī ʿIyād (d. 544/1149) in his <i>Ikmāl al-muʿallim sharḥ ṣahīb Muslim</i> .
QQM	Ibn Qūlūya al-Qummī (d. 369/979) in his <i>Kāmil al-ṣiyārāt</i> .
QRT	al-Qurtubī (d. 671/1273) in his <i>Kitāb al-jāmiʿ li-ahkām al-qurʾān</i> .
RAZ	Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) in his <i>al-Tafsīr al-kabīr</i> .
RHB	al-Tabarī (d. 684/1295) in his <i>Dhakhāʾir al-ʿuqbā</i> .
RQM	al-Qummī (d. 381/991) in <i>Kifāyat al-athar fī al-nusūs ʿalā al-aʾimma al-ithnā ʿasharī</i> .
RTB ¹	Ibn Rustam al-Tabarī (c. 224/839) in his <i>Dalāʾil al-imāma</i> .
RTB ²	Ibn Rustam al-Tabarī in his <i>Bishārat al-mustafā</i> .
RWD ¹	al-Rāwandī (d. 573/1177) in his <i>al-Kharāj wa-l-jarāʾih fī al-muʿjizāt</i> .
RWD ²	al-Rāwandī in his <i>Navādir al-Rāwandī</i> .
RWD ³	al-Rāwandī in his <i>Qisas al-anbiyāʾ</i> .
SBB	al-Sabbān (d. 1206/1792) in his <i>Isʾāf al-rāghibīn</i> .
SʿD	Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845) in his <i>Kitāb al-tabaqāt al-kabīr</i> .

- SDQ¹ Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq (d. 381/991) in his *Kitâb al-amâlî fî al-abâdât wa-l-akhbâr*.
- SDQ² Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq in his *Ikmâl (kamâl) al-dîn wa-itmâm (tamâm) al-ni'ma fî ithbât al-ghayba wa-kashf al-hayra*.
- SDQ³ Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq in his *Man lâ yaduru-hu al-faqîh*.
- SDQ⁴ Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq in his *Kitâb al-kebisâl*.
- SDQ⁵ Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq in his *Uyûn akhbâr al-Ridâ*.
- SDQ⁶ Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq in his *Ma'ânî al-akhbâr*.
- SDQ⁷ Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq in his *Fadâ'il al-ashhur al-thalâtha*.
- SDQ⁸ Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq in his *Ilal al-sharâ'i wa-l-ahkâm*.
- SDQ⁹ Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq in his *Sifât al-shi'a*.
- SDQ¹⁰ Ibn Bâbûya al-Sadûq in his *Fadâ'il al-shi'a*.
- SFI al-Saffûrî (c. 884/1479) in his *Nuzhat al-majâlis wa-muntakhab al-nafâ'is*.
- SHB Ibn Shahrâshûb (d. 588/1192) in his *Manâqib âl Abî Tâlib*.
- SHL al-Shablanjî (d. c. 1301/1883) in his *Nûr al-absâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-mukhtâr*.
- SHR al-Shahrastânî (d. 548/1153) in his *Kitâb al-milal wa-l-nihal*.
- SHT al-Shushtarî (d. 1019/1610) in his *al-Sawârim al-mubriqa fî daf' al-sawâ'iq al-mubriqa*.
- SQL¹ Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalânî (d. 852/1449) in his *al-Isâba fî tamyiz al-sahâba*.
- SQL² Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalânî in his *Lisân al-mîzân*.
- SQL³ Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalânî in his *Fath al-bârî*.
- SQL⁴ Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalânî in his *Tabdhîb al-tabdhîb*.
- SYT al-Suyûtî (d. 911/1505) in his *al-Durr al-manthûr fî al-tafsîr bi-l-ma'thûr*.
- TBR¹ al-Tabarsî (d. 548/1153) in his *I'lâm al-warâ bi-a'lâm al-hudâ*.
- TBR² al-Tabarsî in his *Kitâb al-ibtijâj 'alâ ahl al-lijâj*.
- TBR³ al-Tabarsî in his *Makârim al-akhlâq*.
- TBR⁴ al-Tabarsî in his *Majma' al-bayân fî tafsîr al-qur'ân*.
- TBT al-Tabâtabâ'î (d. 1983) in his *al-Mîzân fî tafsîr al-qur'ân*.
- TFA¹ Shaykh al-Tâ'ifa (d. 458/1066) in his *Tabdhîb al-ahkâm*.
- TFA² Shaykh al-Tâ'ifa in his *al-Amâlî fî al-hadîth*.
- TFA³ Shaykh al-Tâ'ifa in his *Kitâb al-ghayba*.
- TFA⁴ Shaykh al-Tâ'ifa in his *Kitâb asmâ' al-rijâl*.
- TFA⁵ Shaykh al-Tâ'ifa in his *al-Tibyan fî tafsîr al-qur'ân*.

TIB	al-Tibrîzî (c. 737/1336) in his <i>Mishkât al-masâbîh</i> .
TLB	al-Thaʿlabî (d. 427/1035) in his <i>Kitâb ʿarâʾis al-majâlis fî qisas al-anbiyâʾ</i> .
TRM	al-Tirmidhî (d. 279/892) in his <i>Sunan</i> .
TST ¹	Ibn Tâʾûs (d. 664/1266) in his <i>al-Tahsîn li-asrâr mâ ẓâda min akhbâr kitâb al-yaqîn</i> .
TST ²	Ibn Tâʾûs in his <i>al-Tarâʾif fî mâ rifat madhhab al-tawâʾif</i> .
TST ³	Ibn Tâʾûs in his <i>Kitâb al-iqbâl bi-l-aʿmâl al-basana</i> .
TST ⁴	Ibn Tâʾûs in his <i>Kitâb al-yaqîn bi-ikhtisâs manwâ-nâ ʿAlî bi-imârat al-muʾminîn</i> .
TST ⁵	Ibn Tâʾûs in his <i>Falâh al-sâʾil</i> .
TST ⁶	Ibn Tâʾûs in his <i>Kitâb al-lubâf fî qatlâ al-tufûf</i> .
TYM	Ibn Taymiyya (d. c. 728/1328) in his <i>Minhâj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fî naqd kalâm al-shiʿa wa-l-qadariyya</i> .
YTB ¹	al-Tabarî (d. 310/923) in his <i>Jâmiʿ al-bayân ʿan taʾwîl al-qurʾân</i> .
YTB ²	al-Tabarî in his <i>Kitâb akhbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk</i> .
YQB	al-Yaʿqûbî (d. 284/897 or 292/905) in his <i>Taʾrîkh</i> .
ZMR	al-Zamakhsharî (d. 538/1144) in his <i>al-Kashshâf ʿan haqâʾiq al-tanzîl wa-nyûn al-aqâwîl fî wujûh al-taʾwîl</i> .
A.D.	<i>Anno Domini</i>
b.	<i>bin</i> (son)
bb.	<i>bâb</i> (chapter)
B.C.	before Christ
bt.	<i>bint</i> (daughter)
c.	<i>circa</i>
CE.	common era
cf.	confer
ch.	chapter
Col.	The Letter to the Colossians
CRCIS	Computer Research Center of Islamic Sciences
d.	died
Dan.	The Book of Daniel
DENZ.	<i>Enchiridion symbolorum definitionem et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum</i>
ed.	editor
edn.	edition
edns.	editions
eds.	editors

eg.	for example
et al.	and others
etc.	<i>etcetera</i>
Ex.	The Book of Exodus
Ez.	The Book of Ezekiel
ff.	following
GAL	<i>Geschichte der arabischen Literatur</i>
GAS	<i>Geschichte der arabischen Schrifttums</i>
Gen.	The Book of Genesis
Ibid.	<i>ibidem</i>
Jdg.	The Book of Judges
Jn.	The Gospel of John
Kgs.	The Book of Kings
lit.	literally
Lk.	The Gospel of Luke
L.G.	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
Mach.	The Book of Machabees
MIDEO	<i>Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire</i>
Mk.	The Gospel of Mark
MOD.	Tradition and Survival. A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shī'ite Literature
Mt.	The Gospel of Matthew
n.	number
NCE ²	New Catholic Encyclopaedia, 2 ND Edition
n.d.	no date
Nm.	The Book of Numbers
nn.	numbers
n.n.	no number
n.p.	no publisher
nt.	footnote
pl.	plural
Q.	Qur'ân
Rev.	The Book of Revelation
Rm.	The Letter to the Romans
SEI	The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam
sic	thus
St.	Saint
trans.	translator
v.	verse

vol.	volume
vols.	volumes
vv.	verses

INTRODUCTION

Muhammad died in June 10/632,¹ his head cradled on the lap of his young wife ‘Ā’isha, daughter of Abû Bakr.² From the shadows, his only surviving daughter Fâtima glared balefully through her tears at the widow-to-be. There was already little love lost between these two women, and now ‘Ā’isha had ostensibly ousted Fâtima from her father’s side at a crucial moment. Fâtima would die a few months later, but not before ‘Ā’isha had suffered her wrath, banned from her deathbed and from her funeral. Nor would ‘Ā’isha be the only one: Abû Bakr himself would experience Fâtima’s vehemence in the last months of her life, not only for his usurpation, in Shî’a eyes, of the power that rightly belonged to others, but also for his treatment of Fâtima over her inheritance.

The aim of this book is to appraise the life of Fâtima, daughter of Muhammad, at the level of the copious extant Arabic texts, noting throughout both the discrepancies and the similarities that exist between the Shî’a and Sunnî sources and interpretations. It is primarily in the Shî’a texts of ‘Tradition’³ that we happen upon

¹ Because his death is maintained by some to have occurred in the eleventh year of the emigration to Medina (*hijra*), it is popularly held to be 11/632. Mathematically speaking, and in terms of the *hijra* calendar, 632 is the tenth, and not the eleventh year of the *hijra* (which took place in 622).

² ‘Abd Allâh Abû Bakr (d. 12/634), the first to succeed Muhammad in leadership of the community. The Shî’a hold that he died leaning on Abû Bakr.

³ I have used the word ‘Tradition’ to translate the technical Arabic term *hadîth* (pl. *ahâdîth*). Consequently, by ‘corpus of Traditions’ is meant specifically the books of *ahâdîth*. I have given the word a capital letter so as to distinguish it from the other meanings engendered by the word ‘tradition’.

a Fâtima who is startlingly unique and set apart from all other women.

“On the Day of Resurrection, a herald will call from the middle of the throne: ‘People of the Resurrection, lower your gaze, for Fâtima the daughter of Muhammad is crossing bearing a shirt stained with the blood of al-Husayn.’ She will embrace the leg of the throne and say: ‘You are the Omnipotent, the Just! Judge between me and those who killed my son.’ God will judge by my *Summa* – and then she will say: ‘O God, grant me intercession on behalf of whoever weeps over his misfortune.’ And God will grant her intercession on their behalf.”

This pious story, elements of which are found in similar forms in many of the major collections of Shî’a Tradition, together with those Traditions that describe in some detail the entry of Fâtima, arrayed in vestments of light, into Paradise, offers us several noteworthy clues as to how the Shî’a envisage her, and provides us with a framework in which to read their conception of the more mundane aspects of her life. On earth she was impoverished and weak, but her reward in Heaven will comprise incalculable riches, including jeweled habitations, not for her alone but also for her adherents (*shî’a*). On earth she was neglected, marginalized, maltreated and divested of justice, but in Paradise all the populace of that place will bow their heads in deference to her, and her company will be the angels and those richly blessed by God. On earth she wept and grieved after the death of her father Muhammad: even after her own death, her grieving continues unremittingly over the murder of her son al-Husayn and the ill-treatment afforded Muhammad’s family, the ‘people of the house’ (*ahl al-bayt*). But on the Day of Judgment she will be vindicated, the first to enter Paradise, and all her tears will be wiped away as a dreadful punishment is meted out to her son’s murderers. There in that place, this modest and frail woman, who labored under such a burden of weakness during her life, will be endowed with untold power, making intercession before God for those who love and adhere to her.

I have chosen four salient features of Fâtima's life, through which to consider her position, above all in Shî'a Islam. Firstly, her birth, and specifically the annunciation and supernatural intervention surrounding her conception and parturition as recounted in the Shî'a Tradition, teaching and piety. Secondly, the miracle stories recorded by the Shî'a concerning the annunciation, conception and birth of her son al-Husayn. Thirdly, Fâtima as the 'woman of sorrow', and especially the crucial Shî'a concept of her necessary grief and mourning, intimately connected with the martyrdom of her son al-Husayn. And finally, Fâtima's intercessory prerogatives, envisaged as a consequence of her high standing and a reward for her sufferings, giving her startling powers on the Day of Judgment.

These four categories will be considered primarily through the corpus of Shî'a Tradition, teaching and popular piety, including the reinterpretation of Fâtima's life and role from the writings of more contemporary scholars like 'Ali Shariati (d. 1977).

A methodical examination of Fâtima as she is defined in the Shî'a sources presents us at once with an enigma and a number of attendant questions. The enigma arises from the paucity of references to her in the earliest extant texts,⁴ weighed against prolific references in later sources: the dilemma between Fâtima as an ordinary woman (if being the daughter of Muhammad and the wife of 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib, she could be described as such) and Fâtima the 'sinless virgin', chief of the women of paradise (and ostensibly even of the women of the world), the converser with angels and the heavenly intercessor. The questions turn around this very issue: when did Fâtima receive these titles and this status? Why do some of the earliest texts, such as the treasured *Nahj al-balâgha* (the collection of sermons and speeches of her husband 'Alî), *al-Sahîfa al-sajjâdiyya* regarded as the oldest prayer manual in Islamic sources and ascribed to her grandson Zayn al-'Âbidîn, and the *Sîrat Mu-*

⁴ In fact, she is mentioned a number of times, for example, by al-Hilâlî in his *Kitâb Sulaym b. Qays*. This is held by some scholars to be the oldest surviving Shî'a text, the author dying around the year 80/662. In this text Fâtima is already referred to as 'the mistress of the women of paradise'.

hammad Rasûl Allâh, the biography of Muhammad edited by the Sunnî scholar Ibn Hishâm,⁵ scarcely mention her?

Indisputably, running deeply through the Shî'a ethos was the steady realization that they would never attain to the power they thought was their due, and the concomitant turning increasingly to a supernatural, other-worldly power. This would profoundly color their conception not only of Fâtima but of all the 'people of the house'. From about the 4TH/10TH century, in tandem with the rise of several minor and some major Shî'a or pro-Shî'a dynasties (the Fâtimid of Egypt⁶ and the Bûyid of Iran⁷), Fâtima's image changes progressively but considerably. The Fâtimids asserted descent from her, and it was during the Bûyid period in Persia that public mourning for her martyred son al-Husayn was first performed in that country, with public commemorations of Karbalâ' ordered by the Bûyid leader Ahmad b. Bûya around 350/962. From this time, she becomes increasingly more flawless and ever less an ordinary woman. With the 10TH/16TH century, the rise of the Safavid dynasty⁸ and the encyclopedic collection of Traditions by al-Majlisî in his *Bihâr al-annâr*, her translation into a primary saint is complete: a number of titles are conferred upon her, each a manifestation of one or more of her saintly attributes.

⁵ She is mentioned in this text in connection with 'Alî's nickname 'father of dust': apparently, when 'Alî was angry with Fâtima he would not speak to her, but would sprinkle dust over his head. The author notes that whenever Muhammad saw dust on 'Alî's head, he knew that they had been arguing. She is mentioned again in the incident of the washing of the swords after the battle of Uhud. She is described as screening her father with his garment while he washed. Finally, she is cited in connection with the incidents immediately after her father's death. She is also referred to in a fragment of the lost biographical work of Mûsâ b. 'Uqba, in a Tradition which runs: "The Apostle used not to make an exception for Fâtima." This is understood by some as a reference to the Tradition in which Muhammad says that if Fâtima were to steal he would cut off her hand. All of these incidents are examined later in this work. Cf. Guillaume, A. *The Life of Muhammad. A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*: xiv.

⁶ 297/909 – 567/1171. Bosworth, C.E. *Islamic Surveys 5. The Islamic Dynasties*: 46.

⁷ 320/932 – 454/1062. Ibid.: 94.

⁸ 907/1501 – 1145/1732. Ibid.: 172.

In order to underscore the quandary, it would be helpful to scan four fundamental trends. Her image is not much altered since Safavid times, bar one major exception, in the form of ‘Ali Shariati’s celebrated book, *Fatima is Fatima*. A French-educated sociologist, and extremely popular in Iran since the 1970s, Shariati propounded his own very distinct vision of Islam and of society in general. The ‘West’ represented corruption, imperialism, capitalism and commercialism. The ‘East’ had experienced a splendid past, but had degenerated in the hands of dictatorial leaders and opportunist clerics. The Iranian Pahlavî dynasty⁹ had created a class of women with no identity, distorted and cut-off from their origins, heritage and fate. The good Muslim woman had become confused and disorientated, not wanting to be like her mother, but not knowing what she wanted or who she was. Into this state of affairs Shariati introduced his archetypal woman, Fâtima, as a role model for Muslim women, as the woman that Islam would want every woman to be. Shariati’s Fâtima is not the ‘Queen of Heaven’, and is wholly without supernatural attributes: in some ways inimitable, but always entirely human. By her own will and sound judgment she had chosen to be loyal, devoted, compassionate and ready to sacrifice herself for her family and her true fate. All women in Iran, posited Shariati, should adhere to her example and be, like her, an object of sacrifice. This image was taken up enthusiastically by women during the Iranian Revolution, only to be discarded and critically questioned by most women two decades later.

A second trend arises virtually as a reaction against Shariati, as we encounter fresh contemporary debates around Fâtima’s personality. Rosiny¹⁰ recounts a deliberation between two Lebanese Shî’a theologians, each representing a distinct tendency: Ja‘far Murtaḍâ al-‘Âmilî, representing the conservative ‘historical school’ and Muhammad Husayn Fadlallâh, spiritual leader of the Hizbullâh movement and a modern reformist. The discussion centers around an incident, shortly after the death of Muhammad and the nomination of Abû Bakr as the first of the four ‘rightly-guided Caliphs’ (usurped, in the Shî’a view, from ‘Ali): it appears that the

⁹ 1344/1925 – 1399/1979. Ibid.: 180.

¹⁰ Rosiny S. “The Tragedy of Fâtima al-Zahrâ’ in the Debate of Two Shiite Theologians in Lebanon”: 207-219.

intention of Abû Bakr, ‘Umar¹¹ and some others, angered by ‘Alî’s refusal to pay allegiance (*bay‘a*), was to take him by force to the mosque and compel him to do so. An armed group went to the house of ‘Alî and Fâtima, threatening to set fire to it. They forced their way in, ostensibly seriously injuring Fâtima in the process, possibly even beating her and thereby causing the miscarriage of her unborn son.¹² There are numerous reports of this incident, each of them diverse and recounting disparate information.

Although he does not contest some sort of attack, Fadlallâh refuses to allow himself to be influenced by the narratives about the physical violence perpetrated against Fâtima, claiming that the stories are weakly documented or contradictory, and that there are too many legends that are embellished and difficult to substantiate. He censures many of the texts about Fâtima, such as those which recount her being created out of light. Instead, he wants the transmitters to accentuate her political, religious and social activities, so that she could become a model for the modern activist female Muslim. Fâtima’s life demonstrates that it is possible for women to enter fully into the cultural and social *milieu*, and offers a paradigm to be imitated. Fadlallâh depicts the ‘people of the house’ as human beings with explicable reasons for their actions and habits, and underscores the human traits of the Shî‘a holy ones, so as to offer them as prototypes for contemporary life.

Al-‘Âmilî defends Fâtima and the miraculous aspects of Shî‘a belief, portraying her as a badly tyrannized woman (*al-mazlûma*). He regards the mystical (some would say mythical) aspects of Fâtima’s life as crucial to Shî‘a belief, so that minimizing or denying them would in consequence seriously demoralize the faith. He calls attention to many of these Traditions: among them, her creation from a fruit of paradise, her conversing with her mother from the womb, her preservation from menstruation, and her never having shed blood when giving birth.

A third, much older trend, and an example of the extreme ‘divinization’ of Fâtima, is her assessment in the creed and liturgy

¹¹ ‘Umar b. al-Khattâb (d. 22/644), the second to succeed Muhammad in leadership of the community.

¹² This is the claim of the Shî‘a: but cf. HNB. vol. I, *Musnad ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*. n. 769: 211-212, n. 953: 250-251, where his birth is recorded, and n. 1370: 335 where it is omitted.

of the Nusayrî sect (also known as the ‘Alawî),¹³ which developed from a radical Shî‘a group¹⁴ and which has been dominant in Syria for the last thirty years.¹⁵ The crux of heterodox Nusayrî belief consists in the deification of ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib, husband of Fâtima and cousin of Muhammad, thus decisively placing this sect amongst the extremists (*ghulât*), a category pertaining to groups positing that a particular person is God or that a particular person is a prophet after Muhammad. A number of Nusayrî texts are extant: these include *Munâẓarat al-shaykh al-Nassâbî tatadammanu ak-bassa ‘aqâ’idi-him bi-l-taḥbûd*, a 7TH/13TH century treatise on Nusayrî ‘trinitarian’ theology and al-Tabarânî’s *Majmû‘ al-a’yâd*, on the Nusayrî liturgical calendar.¹⁶ An astonishing and radical picture of Fâtima emerges from these and other texts: credited with a special status as the mother of ‘Alî’s sons and a member of the ‘holy family’, she is regarded as the patroness of the nineteenth and twenty-third nights of the month of *Ramadân*. As regards the ‘night midway through the month of *Sha‘bân*’ (*laylat al-nisf min sha‘bân*), which is associated with the ‘night of power’ (*laylat al-qadr*) and is regarded as one of the most important nights of the year for Divine blessing, al-Tabarânî posits that six nights of *Ramadân* are consecrated to Fâtima, who is further identified as the person of the ‘night of power’ and the ‘night midway through the month of *Sha‘bân*’. Fâtima is named with her masculine title – *al-Fâtir*. One author notes:

“The need to present Fâtima substantially as a masculine divine entity historically disguised as a female is a common Nusayrî motif deriving from

¹³ Cf. Kramer, M, ed. *Shi‘ism, Resistance and Revolution*: 237-254.

¹⁴ The Nusayrî began as a group (after the death of the tenth Imâm) under the leadership of Muhammad b. Nusayr al-Namîrî, about whose teachings (mostly extremist) there are diverse opinions. In fact the real founder of the sect was Husayn b. Hamdân al-Khasîbî, and, like the ‘Alawî, they remain politically active in Syria. Cf. Momen, M. *An Introduction to Shi‘i Islam. The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi‘ism*: 58.

¹⁵ Cf. Bar-Asher, M.B, and Kofsky, A. *The Nusayri-‘Alawi Religion. An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy*.

¹⁶ Abû Sa‘îd Maymûn b. al-Qâsim al-Tabarânî (d. 426/1034: Cf. GAS I: 584, where the work is unrecorded).

the tension created by introducing a feminine element into the divine realm.”¹⁷

Under that masculine title, and together with her sons, she is identified with Muhammad, his substance and his light (*baqîqa muhammadiyya wa-nûr muhammadî*). In the Nusayrî view, the historical appearance of Fâtima in the form of a female took place merely to confound those who are weak of mind.

For al-Tabarânî, the ‘night midway through the month of *Sha‘bân*’ is even more important than the six distinguished nights of the month of *Ramadân*: and while the Divine power manifested on this night is identified with Muhammad, the night itself is identified with Fâtima, who is conceived of as the inner mystery of Muhammad: the two are in essence one and the same, in a sort of hypostatic identity. It is thus, with Muhammad identified with the Divine power and Fâtima conceived of as his essence, that she is equated with ‘night of power’. It is only the feeble-minded who regard Fâtima as an ordinary woman of flesh and blood: she is named *Fâtîr* because she is the one who created the creatures and shaped them. The angels who brought down God’s decrees on that night were possessors of the true knowledge of Fâtima. For al-Tabarânî therefore, the theological weight of the ‘night midway through the month of *Sha‘bân*’ lies with Fâtima, who is the feminine manifestation of the masculine second person of the deity (her father Muhammad). She remains an ongoing presence in Nusayrî religious history and consciousness (through the medium of the Imâms and perhaps even their own religious leaders) and is understood as exercising an eschatological role in preparing for the coming of the redeemer. It could, writes our author,

“...be argued that...the festival of mid-*Sha‘bân* is primarily a celebration of Fâtima as the divine mother, the consort of the supreme deity, ‘Alî, and the mother of his divine descendants. It could further be argued that in this symbolism Muhammad as the second person of the trinity becomes somewhat redundant, which may help to explain

¹⁷ Bar-Asher, M.B., and Kofsky, A. *The Nusayri-‘Alawi Religion*: 144.

the strong emphasis on the absolute identity of Fâtima and Muhammad, stressing the feminine aspect of the masculine deity.”¹⁸

A final trend is encountered among Western orientalists, for our purposes best represented by two: Louis Massignon (d. 1962), attracted by Fâtima as he was by other Islamic personalities, found numerous, if not obvious, parallels between Fâtima and Christian figures, and developed them positively in his writings.¹⁹ Almost wholly opposed to Massignon (and predating him) is the Jesuit priest Henri Lammens (d. 1937), with his very idiosyncratic vision of Islam:²⁰ he accepts solely the fact that Fâtima existed, scathingly rejecting the Traditions and theology constructed around her, and dismissing her as a lackluster, unattractive and disconsolate creature, a source of annoyance to her father and of irritation to her husband.²¹ In this, he fairly echoes the traditionalist Sunnî historian Ibn Kathîr, who remarked that Fâtima was merely a woman “who could not hope for infallibility”²² (expressing the concept of ‘infallibility’ with the Arabic *‘isma*, a term much employed by the Shî’a for Fâtima, who use it in the sense of ‘impeccability’ and ‘infallibility’).

Our task is to unearth the authentic Fâtima, who must lie somewhere between the heterodox Nusayrî, the traditionalists represented by Ja’far Murtaḍâ al-‘Âmilî (and the whole corpus of Shî’a Tradition), the disparate Western orientalists and the revolutionary, sometimes almost secular Shariati. Considering the age of the majority of sources available, the line between historicity and hagiography is bound to become hazy. Supposedly, one could use a sort of *via negativa* to arrive at the element of truth around which the

¹⁸ Bar-Asher, M.B., and Kofsky, A. *The Nusayrî-‘Alawî Religion*: 146.

¹⁹ Massignon, L. “Der Gnostische Kult der Fatima im Schiitischen Islam: 514-522; “La Mubahala de Médine et l’Hyperdulie de Fatima”: 550-572; “La Notion de Voeu et la Dévotion Musulmane à Fatima”: 573-591; “L’Oratoire de Marie à l’Acqa, vu sous le Voile de Deuil de Fatima”: 592-618.

²⁰ Cf. Lammens, H. “Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad”: 218-329.

²¹ Ibid.: 245.

²² KTR¹. vol. V: 249.

hagiographers have constructed their narratives. However, it is precisely here that Lammens' scathing attack on Fâtima must be judged, at the very least, to be reductionist.²³ He dismisses the whole corpus of Shî'a Tradition as spurious and, in contrast, appears to accept uncritically the Sunnî corpus as authentic, since he uses it to bolster his anti-Fâtima stance. But he fails to see that she has, in many Sunnî Traditions, a distinct status, at the very least as the member of an exclusive and revered household, and that a substantial number of Sunnî Traditions, as we shall discover, exalt her standing somewhat more radically.

Since the aim of this work is not primarily a critical analysis of the Shî'a and Sunnî texts *per se*, but a critical examination of the life of Fâtima at the level of those texts, they have been read expressly as religious texts, and treated as sacrosanct documents which employ a specifically numinous language, and around which a distinctive theology and spirituality have been constructed. Just as sacred history cannot be read in the same manner as secular history, so too religious or sacred texts must be studied within the confines of their own genre. I have consequently taken the texts at face-value, and have read them for their value as primary Islamic religious documents. The corpus of Islamic Traditions is divided into various categories: for the purposes of this study, it is worth noting that while many Islamic religious texts fall into juridical or legalistic categories, a large proportion of the Shî'a Traditions concerning Fâtima and examined in this work, fall rather into the category of edification.

²³ Nabia Abbott accuses him of the same sort of extremism concerning his view of 'Â'isha: cf. Abbott, N. *Aishah the Beloved of Mohammed*: xviii.

1 FÂTIMA IN HER CONTEXT: HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The disagreement about Fâtima's date of birth is startling, a source of polemics between the Shî'a and the Sunnî, and a controversial point upon which to begin a study of her life. It is also the starting point for Lammens' disparagement of the stories surrounding her. As the context for an assessment of Fâtima's life, the following Common Era dates may prove useful:²⁴

■ c. 570-571, the birth of Muhammad.²⁵ The biographical data (*sîra*) and collections of Traditions offer three reference points for his life, although considering the age of the sources, they must be treated with caution. He was apparently twenty-five years of age when he married Khadija (therefore, around 595).²⁶ Khadija was a woman of forty years at the time of the marriage.²⁷ Muhammad

²⁴ Rahman, H.U. *A Chronology of Islamic History 570-1000 CE*.

²⁵ Calculations that Maxime Rodinson declares to be 'dubious' put the birth of Muhammad somewhere between 567 and 573, with 571 as the commonly accepted date. Cf. Rodinson, M. *Mohammed*: 38.

²⁶ HSH. vol. I: 87 (which notes that some say he was twenty-one, or thirty, or thirty-seven); S^CD. vol. X, *Dbîker Khadîja*, n. 4926: 17, 18; BLD¹. vol. I, *Mab'ath rasûl Allâh*, n. 187: 103-104; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ*, bb. *al-Hâ'*, n. 3311: 1818 (which notes that some say he was twenty-one or twenty-four); JWZ². vol. I, *Dbîker tazwîj rasûl Allâh*: 25; ATH¹. vol. II: 24; KTR¹. vol. II: 294. Among the Shî'a cf. YQB. vol. II: 19 (which notes that some say he was thirty) and MSD. vol. III, bb. 71, n. 1461: 15.

²⁷ HSH. vol. I: 87 (which notes that some say she was forty-five); S^CD. vol. X, *Dbîker Khadîja*, n. 4926: 16 (which claims that she was born fifteen years before the 'Year of the Elephant', dated as well before 570, and that some claim she was twenty-eight when she married Muhammad) and n. 4926: 17-18 (he also reports a strand that held her to be twenty-

was thirty-five when, ten years later, the Quraysh tore down the *Ka'ba* in order to reconstruct it,²⁸ and forty years of age when the prophetic call came, in 610.²⁹

■ c. 600, the birth of 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib, making him (as maintained by the Sunnî scholars) five years older than Fâtima.³⁰

■ c. 605, the birth of Fâtima (as asserted by the Sunnî scholars). According to the Sunnî historian al-Tabarî,³¹ Fâtima was the youngest child of Khadîja and Muhammad, born five years before Muhammad's prophetic call and the start of the revelations, while the Quraysh were still reconstructing the *Ka'ba*. This would put her date of birth in about 605, when Muhammad was approximately thirty-five years of age, (the first revelations coming down in 610). In these details, al-Tabarî is in almost complete harmony with the majority of Sunnî authors who write of Fâtima's birth.³² Not all the

eight on her marriage day, since she was born fifteen years before the 'Year of the Elephant' and Muhammad thirteen years before it. BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Hâ'*, n. 3311: 1818; JWZ². vol. I, *Dhîkr tazwîj rasûl Allâh*: 25; vol. II, *al-Mustafayât min tabaqât al-sahâbayât*: 1.

²⁸ SCD. vol. X, *Dhîkr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 27; BLD¹. vol. I, *Binâ' Quraysh al-ka'ba*, n. 178: 99; vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 865: 404; YTB². vol. VI, n. 1130: 51; ATH¹. vol. II: 24; KTR¹. vol. II: 294; ISM. vol. I, bb. 5: 424-5.

²⁹ SCD. vol. X, *Dhîkr Khadîja*, n. 4926: 18; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. 6, n. 3625: 233; BLD¹. vol. I, *Mab'ath rasûl Allâh*, n. 187: 103-104; YTB². vol. VI, nn. 1139-1141: 60-61 (which notes that some say he was forty-one or forty-three); ISM. vol. I, bb. 5: 424-5. Among the Shî'a cf. MSD. vol. III, bb. 71, n. 1461: 15, bb. 70, n. 1458: 12 (there were five years between the building of the *Ka'ba* and the prophetic call).

³⁰ SCD. vol. X, *Dhîkr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 20; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 865: 404; ISM. vol. I, bb. 5: 424-5.

³¹ YTB². vol. XXXIX, nn. 2434-2437: 166-169. In vol. IX, n. 1767: 127 he names eight children: al-Qâsim, al-Tayyib, al-Tâhir, 'Abd Allâh, Zaynab, Ruqayya, Umm Kulthûm and Fâtima.

³² SCD. vol. X, *Dhîkr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 20, 27; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 865: 404; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 1: 89 (including a Tradition positing that Fâtima was born when Muhammad was forty-one years old); JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*: 414; JWZ². vol. I, *al-Inâth min awlâd*: 57, vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 2; KTR¹. vol. VI: 332; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*, n. 830: 365, where he carries a Tradition that holds her birth as 'one or more years'

transmitters agree that she was the youngest of the girls, and it is virtually impossible to establish how many children Muhammad actually had and whether Fâtima was the youngest daughter (except by attempting to discover which daughter was married first). Ibn Hishâm, Ibn Kathîr (from Ibn Ishâq and Ibn Hishâm), al-ʿIsâmî, al-Balâdhurî, ʿAbd al-Barr (from Ibn Ishâq), al-Jawzî and Ibn al-Athîr name her as the youngest daughter.³³ Others, reporting differing strands, place her third in a list of six children,³⁴ or first or second in a list of four girls.³⁵ Ibn Saʿd posits Zaynab as the eldest girl, followed by Ruqayya and Umm Kulthûm, all of them marrying before the prophetic call: al-Jawzî concurs with this, while ʿAbd al-Barr reports one strand which names Zaynab as the eldest.³⁶ There is therefore no absolute consensus between the Sunnî scholars: al-Khawârizmî and ʿAbd al-Barr carry Traditions saying that Fâtima was born when Muhammad was forty-one, but these fit in with neither the Sunnî nor the Shīʿa contention.³⁷ Adding to the dilemma is an unusual Tradition, carried by the Shīʿa transmitters Ibn Shahrâshûb and al-Majlisî, which insists that Khadîja was a virgin when Muhammad married her, and that her daughters Ruqayya and Zaynab were in fact the children of her sister.³⁸

after the prophetic calling; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâʾ*, n. 4434: 441; ISM. vol. I, bb. 5: 424-5; SHL. bb. *Faḍl fî dhikr manâqib ʿAlî b. Abî Tâlib*: 42-43.

³³ HSH. vol. I: 190; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwāj rasûl Allâh*, n. 861: 396; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâʾ*, bb. *al-Hâʾ*, n. 3311: 1819, n. 4057: 1893; JWZ². vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 2; ATH². vol. V, *Fî maʾrifat al-ashâba*: 519-520; KTR¹. vol. II, *Faṣl fî taswîjî-hî*: 294; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâʾ*, n. 830: 365.

³⁴ KTR¹. vol. II: 294 (in a report from Ibn ʿAbbâs).

³⁵ BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâʾ*, bb. *al-Hâʾ*, n. 3311: 1818. ʿAbd al-Barr is reporting from three different chains of transmission.

³⁶ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4928 (*Zaynab*): 31; n. 4929 (*Ruqayya*): 36; n. 4930 (*Umm Kulthûm*): 37; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâʾ*, bb. *al-Hâʾ*, n. 3311: 1818; JWZ². vol. I, *al-Inâth min awlâd*: 57.

³⁷ BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâʾ*, n. 4057: 1893; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Faḍāʾil Fâtima al-Zahrâʾ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 74: 128; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâʾ*, n. 830: 365.

³⁸ SHB. vol. I, bb. *Fî aqrîbâʾi-hî wa khaddâmi-hî*: 206; MJL. vol. XXII, bb. 2, n. 5: 191. Ibn Shahrâshûb writes: “It was transmitted by Ahmad al-Balâdhurî and Abû al-Qâsim al-Kûfî in their books, and al-Murtadâ in *al-Shâfiʿ* and Abû Jaʿfar in *al-Talkhîs* that when the Prophet married Khadîja

The number of Muhammad's children remains an indecisive question. While there is little doubt that he had four daughters by Khadîja³⁹ (even though their order is not clear), his sons present a further problem. All his children, except for the short-lived

she was a virgin. This is confirmed in what was cited in the two books *al-Anwâr* and *al-Bida'* that Ruqayya and Zaynab were the daughters of Hâla, the sister of Khadîja." He does not clearly identify his sources: al-Balâdhurî, in his treatment of Muhammad's marriage to Khadîja in his book *Kitâb ansâb al-asraf*, not only insists that Ruqayya and Zaynab were born to Muhammad from Khadîja, but also writes of her marriages and children prior to her marriage with Muhammad (cf. BLD¹. vol. I, n. 168: 95, n. 175: 97-99, nn. 860-863, 867: 396-401, 406). Possibly, Ibn Shahrâshûb is referring to another of al-Balâdhurî's works. Nor is it easy to identify Ibn Shahrâshûb's other sources: he mentions what is almost certainly the work *al-Shâfi fî al-imâma* by al-Murtadâ (d. 436/1044: Cf. GAL S. I: 704). Abû al-Qâsim al-Kûfî is named by Sezgin as Abû al-Qâsim 'Alî b. Ahmad al-Kûfî (d. 352/963), and two works are imputed to him: *al-Istighâtha fî bida' al-thalâtha* and *al-Âdâb wa-makârim al-akhlâq* (cf. GAS I: 543). Brockelmann names him as 'Alî b. Ibrâhîm al-ʿAlawî al-Kûfî and imputes to him only *al-Istighâtha fî bida' al-thalâtha* (cf. GAL S. I: 320). This is in all probability the same mentioned by al-Najâshî (NJA. bb. 691: 265) – but al-Najâshî, without offering a comprehensive list, notes that this al-Kûfî is the author of many books. He mentions al-Kûfî's *Kitâb al-bad' al-muhaddata*, possibly, the source named by Ibn Shahrâshûb, but not *al-Istighâtha* or *al-Âdâb*. In vol. VII of his *al-Kawthar fî ahwâl Fâtima bt. al-nabî al-athar*, al-Mûsawî, who mentions this Tradition, lists among his sources a book entitled *al-Bad' wa-l-ta'rikh* and although he offers a slightly different name for the author, it appears to be the same work listed by Brockelmann as *Kitâb al-bad' wa-ta'rikh*. Regrettably, Brockelmann provides a non-existent reference for it. Sezgin lists the same book, giving the author as Abû Nasr al-Mutahhar b. Mutahhar al-Maqdisî (c. 355/966: Cf. GAS I: 337): by this author, Brockelmann lists a work entitled *Kitâb bad' al-khalq wa-ta'rikh* (cf. GAL S. 1: 222). Cf. al-Mûsawî, M.B. *al-Kawthar fî ahwâl Fâtima bt. al-nabî al-athar*, vol. VII, Part 30 (*fî sha'n ummi-hâ Khadîja al-kubrâ*), bb. 4, n. 1/4266: 458. The contention that Ruqayya and Zaynab were the children of Khadîja's sister is also carried by al-ʿAmilî (cf. AML. vol. III: 82). Nevertheless, many Shīʿa texts speak of Khadîja's two husbands prior to Muhammad, and the children she bore them: cf. TFA². bb. 12, n. 37-1031: 463; TBR¹.: 139; IRB. vol. I: 402, 510; MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 8: 171, vol. XXII, bb. 3, n. 20: 300.

³⁹ Cf. for e.g. RAZ. vol. XIV, Part 27, *Sûrat al-shûrâ*: 186; KTR². vol. V, *Sûrat al-ahzâb*: 469-470 for lists of four sons and four daughters.

Ibrâhîm, born of his Coptic wife Mâriya around the fourth year after the emigration (*hijra*), were born of Khadîja.⁴⁰ Al-Khawârizmî reports four sons: al-Qâsim, al-Tâhir, al-Mutahhar and al-Tayyib (or ‘Abd Allâh).⁴¹ But most other authors raise some doubts about the names and the number, suggesting rather that there were two sons, al-Qâsim and ‘Abd Allâh, both of whom died in infancy, and that the names al-Tâhir and al-Tayyib are alternative names for ‘Abd Allâh.⁴² Almost all the sources are in agreement that all of Muhammad’s children predeceased him, with the exception of Fâtima.⁴³

⁴⁰ SCD. vol. X, *Dbîkr Khadîja*, n. 4926: 19; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 77: 130; JWZ². vol. I, *Dbîkr awlâd (Muhammad)*: 57; DHB¹. vol. I: 10.

⁴¹ KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 77: 130.

⁴² HSH. vol. I: 190; SCD. vol. X, *Dbîkr Khadîja*, n. 4926: 17, where we are told the children were: al-Qâsim, ‘Abd Allâh (who was also called al-Tâhir), al-Tayyib, Zaynab, Ruqayya, Umm Kulthûm and Fâtima; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 866: 405; YTB². vol. VI, nn. 1127-1129: 47-49; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, bb. *al-Hâ’*, n. 3311: 1819; JWZ². vol. I, *Dbîkr awlâd (Muhammad)*: 57. W. Montgomery Watt names two sons, al-Qâsim and ‘Abd Allâh, but suggests that they might be one and the same person. He posits that it is generally believed that al-Tâhir and al-Tayyib were other names for ‘Abd Allâh (cf. Watt, W.M. “*Khadîja*”: 898-899). Armstrong writes of ‘at least’ six children, naming al-Qâsim and ‘Abd Allâh as the two sons (cf. Armstrong, K. *Muhammad*: 81). Lings is in agreement: he names six children, starting with the short-lived al-Qâsim, followed by Zaynab, Ruqayya, Umm Kulthûm and Fâtima, and then another short-lived son, whom Lings fails to name (cf. Lings, M. *Muhammad, his life based on the earliest sources*: 37).

⁴³ BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 861: 396; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 77: 130. Among the Shî’a cf. MSD. vol. III, bb. 72, n. 1485: 22-23.

■ c. 610, Muhammad receives the first revelations.⁴⁴ Alone in his cave on retreat, Muhammad, if not already a strict monotheist then fast getting there,⁴⁵ was shaken by a heavenly voice. It was not the voice of God, for Islam, indomitably preserving the transcendent mystery would never permit such a thing, but the voice of an angelic intermediary, whose first command to Muhammad was not to write anything down, but to «*Recite, in the name of your Lord who created, created mankind from a clot*» (Q. 96: 1-2).

Different accounts suggests Q. 74 as the first revelation: whichever it was, the first Divine communication was followed by a disconcerting pause (*fatra*), perplexing not only for Muhammad but also for our understanding of this crucial event for, as some authors point out, this pause (of up to three years) means that Muhammad did not at once set about obeying the Divine command.⁴⁶

■ c. 619, the death of Khadīja, and Muhammad's 'night journey' (*isrâ'*) and 'ascension' (*mi'râj*). The date of Muhammad's journey to Heaven (and, in terms of being the mother of Fâtima, the date of Khadīja's death) becomes pivotal and something of a stumbling block when we turn to the Shī'a dating of Fâtima's birth. The consensus of the Sunnī scholars is that Khadīja died (before Abû Tâlib by anything between three and fifty-five days)⁴⁷ in Mecca at the age of sixty-five, ten years after the first revelations to Muhammad, three years before the *hijra* and before the prayer was made obligatory.⁴⁸ 'Abd al-Barr brings in a contradictory strand, placing her

⁴⁴ Cf. for e.g. S^CD. vol. X, *Dhikr Khadīja*, n. 4926: 18; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. 6, n. 3625: 233; BLD¹. vol. I, *Mab'ath rasûl Allâh*, n. 187: 103-104; YTB². vol. VI, nn. 1139-1141: 60-61 (which notes that some say he was forty-one or forty-three); ISM. vol. I, bb. 5: 424-5. Among the Shī'a cf. MSD. vol. III, bb. 71, n. 1461: 15, bb. 70, n. 1458: 12 (there were five years between the building of the *Ka'ba* and the prophetic call).

⁴⁵ Rodinson maintains that there are "clear indications in his later life to suggest that, like everyone else, he practiced the religion of his fathers" and that Muhammad was not an instant monotheist. Cf. Rodinson, M. *Mohammed*: 48.

⁴⁶ Cf. Buhl, H, and Welch A.T. "Muhammad": 363.

⁴⁷ ATH¹. vol. II: 63-64.

⁴⁸ S^CD. vol. X, *Dhikr Khadīja*, n. 4926: 19; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 58 (*Kitâb manâqib al-ansâr*), ch. 43, n. 236: 153; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâġ rasûl Allâh*, n. 867: 405; YTB². vol. VI, n. 1156: 76, n. 1199: 115; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-*

death at the age of sixty-four, seven years after the prophetic call, three to five years before the *hijra* and three years, or thereabouts, before the 'night journey'.⁴⁹ This Tradition stands alone, agreeing with neither the Sunnî nor the Shî'a system of dating. The Shî'a historians appear to agree with the Sunnî dating of her death (al-Ya'qûbî giving her age as sixty-two).⁵⁰

The 'night journey' is more challenging to date, but decisive in terms of Fâtima. The majority of Sunnî sources (and those biographers who follow them) place the 'night journey' after the death of Khadîja and Muhammad's visit to Tâ'if, between one and three years before the *hijra* to Medina, and when Muhammad was aged fifty-one or thereabouts.⁵¹ Again, the Shî'a historians appear to agree with the Sunnî dating, although while al-Mas'ûdî places Khadîja's death before Muhammad's 'night journey' (in common with the Sunnî commentators), al-Ya'qûbî dates her death after it.⁵²

In terms of the expressions 'night journey' (*isrâ'*) and 'ascension' (*mi'râj*), it is not entirely clear whether we are dealing with one single event (the *mi'râj* following on the heels of the *isrâ'*) or two entirely different journeys. Nor can we be sure of the dating: Bevan⁵³ posits that the two stories allude to two wholly different situations, and that the event of the ascension must be understood as having occurred near the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic career, as a sort of initiation (through a rite of purification in which his breast was opened and his heart cleansed).⁵⁴ This theory is in

nisâ', bb. *al-Hâ'*, n. 3311: 1818; JWZ². vol. II, *al-Mustafayât min tabaqât al-sahâbayât*: 1; ATH¹. vol. II: 63-64; ISM. vol. I, bb. 1: 286.

⁴⁹ BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Hâ'*, n. 3311: 1818, 1825.

⁵⁰ YQB. vol. II: 34; MSD. vol. III, bb. 72, n. 1466: 18, n. 1476: 23, bb. 73, n. 1485: 27-28.

⁵¹ BLD¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî qissat al-mi'râj*, n. 586: 200; ATH¹. vol. II: 33; ISM. vol. I, bb. 1: 286. Cf. Armstrong, K. *Muhammad*: 138; Lings, M. *Muhammad*: 101.

⁵² YQB. vol. II: 25, 34, 36; MSD. vol. III, bb. 72, n. 1476: 23, bb. 73, n. 1485: 27-28.

⁵³ Bevan, A.A. "Mohammad's Ascension to Heaven": 51-61.

⁵⁴ Cf. for e.g. BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 54 (*Kitâb bad' al-khalq*), ch. 6, n. 429: 287-290, vol. IV, bk. 55 (*Kitâb ahâdîth al-anbiyâ'*), ch. 5, (n.n.): 353-356, vol. V, bk. 58 (*Kitâb manâqib al-ansâr*), ch. 41, n. 227: 143-148; TIB. vol. II, bk. 27 (*Kitâb al-fitan*), bb. 23: 1264-1274; KTR². vol. IV, *Sûrat al-isrâ'*: 239.

accord with that of Schrieke,⁵⁵ who holds that *al-masjid al-aqsâ* is located not in Jerusalem but in God's heavenly sanctuary, as well as with Horovitz and Hartman.⁵⁶ Writing in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Knappert⁵⁷ offers a clarification of the following Qur'anic passage:

«Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of Worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that We might show him Our tokens» (Q. 17: 1).

According to Knappert, the oldest explanation, not found in more modern commentaries, finds in this passage an intimation of Muhammad's ascension to Heaven and preserves the original meaning of that event: the word *isrâ'* is used as synonymous with *mi'râj* and the expression *al-masjid al-aqsâ* is interpreted not as Jerusalem but as 'the furthest place of worship' (Heaven). Several versions of this night journey are contained in the books of Tradition, with the story related in Q. 17: 1 being only one of them, and with these stories being adapted to the Qur'anic version so as to present a unified picture. Three types of event are narrated in the Traditions: an ascension (*mi'râj*) by Muhammad into Heaven from a location in Mecca; a journey (*isrâ'*) by Muhammad from Mecca to a place called *al-masjid al-aqsâ*; and finally, a combination of the two events, found mostly in the older commentaries, with Mecca as the starting point of the *mi'râj* and the temple in Jerusalem the starting point of the *isrâ'*.

The oldest account of the *mi'râj* comes from Ibn Sa'd: he dates it as eighteen months before the *hijra*, with similar accounts (without the date) found in Ibn Hanbal (quoted by Ibn Kathîr), al-Bukhârî, Muslim and al-Nasâ'î.⁵⁸ The latter three (but not Ibn Sa'd)

⁵⁵ Schrieke, B. "Die Himmelsreise Muhammads": 1-30.

⁵⁶ Horovitz, J. "Muhammeds Himmelfahrt": 159-183; Hartmann, R. "Die Himmelsreise Muhammads und ihre Bedeutung in der Religion des Islam": 42-65.

⁵⁷ Knappert, J. "Mi'râj": 97-99.

⁵⁸ SCD. vol. 1, *Dhikr al-mi'râj*: 181, *Dhikr laylat al-isrâ'*: 182; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb manâqib al-ansâr*), n. 227: 143, n. 228: 148-149; MSL. ch.

add the story of Muhammad's breast being opened just before the ascension and his heart being purified. Busse insists that this story must be separated from the ascension and night journey material, since it already exists, standing on its own, as something that happened to Muhammad when he was a boy.⁵⁹ The oldest account of the *isrâ'* is found in Ibn Ishâq, relayed by Ibn Hishâm and told in three versions. Almost the same details are given in later accounts, with Ibn Sa'd dating it as one year before the *hijra* (and thus obviously understanding these as two different events). It is also Ibn Ishâq who provides the oldest evidence of the two stories being joined into one event (although he tells them separately), the one following immediately after the other and, as a natural consequence, the expression *al-masjid al-aqsâ* coming to be understood as the temple in Jerusalem.⁶⁰ Knappert suggests that the two interpretations became harmonized, with a 'night journey to Jerusalem' assigned to the term *isrâ'* and the ascension, having lost its original meaning, being altered in date and made to happen in a later period.⁶¹

Within the mass of acquiescence sounds a lone note of noncompliance. It is al-Tabarî, who places the event close to the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic call, although this does not accord with most other Sunnî sources.⁶² Al-Tabarî is following a much older Tradition and elucidation of the 'night journey' not found in the later commentaries and is refusing the construal of *al-masjid al-aqsâ* as Jerusalem. Knappert concludes that the earlier Tradition of Mecca as the starting point of the ascension has been ousted by later Traditions which made Jerusalem its starting point.

75, *Kitâb al-îmân*, n. 313: 103-106; NSA¹. vol. I, *Kitâb al-salât*, bb. 1 *Fard al-salât*: 217.

⁵⁹ Busse, H. "Jerusalem in the Story of Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascension": 25. Cf. MSL. ch. 75, *Kitâb al-îmân*, n. 311: 103.

⁶⁰ Cf. BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 55 (*Kitâb ahâdîth al-anbîyâ'*), ch. 9, n. 585: 383 for a Tradition insisting that the first mosque to be constructed on earth was the *masjid al-harâm* in Mecca, followed by the *masjid al-aqsâ* in Jerusalem.

⁶¹ Cf. for e.g. RWD¹. vol. I, *al-Juz' al-awwal fî mu'jizât nabî-nâ*, bb. 1 *Fasl min riwâ'yât al-khâsa* (Fadak): 112. A Shî'a transmitter, he discerns two events (*isrâ'* and *mi'râj*) and places them three years after the prophetic call.

⁶² YTB². vol. VII, n. 1156: 78.

Furthermore, some of the questions put to Muhammad during the journey through the heavens indicate that the ascension originally belonged to a much early period, closer to his prophetic call than to the *hijra*. Considering their dating of Fâtima's birth (and their insistence upon Muhammad consuming heavenly fruit during his heavenly sojourn), one would at once conclude that the Shî'a historians would, like al-Tabarî, insist on a much early date for the *isrâ'- mi'râj*: in this way, their claim for a post-'night journey' birth date for Fâtima would become substantially more plausible. But they do not: their historians are in basic agreement with their Sunnî counterparts, putting the date close to the *hijra*.⁶³ Their solution is not to insist on an early date, but to posit more than one night journey – not in the sense proposed by Bevan, but as an entirely different event.

■ c. 622, the emigration (*hijra*) to Medina. After the *hijra*, Muhammad moved his daughters Umm Kulthûm and Fâtima to Medina. One Tradition holds that he dispatched his adopted son Zayd b. Hâritha to fetch them,⁶⁴ while another holds that Ibn al-'Abbâs undertook this mission, and that the journey had an inauspicious start when one al-Huwayrith b. Nuqaydh b. Wahb interfered with the camels, causing the girls to fall. In his history, al-Tabarî recounts that this man was killed by 'Alî because he was one of those who annoyed Muhammad in Mecca: this is confirmed by at least three Shî'a transmitters, although they make no mention of the incident with the camels.⁶⁵

⁶³ YQB. vol. II: 25, 34, 36; MSD. vol. III, bb. 72, n. 1476: 23, bb. 73, n. 1485: 27-28.

⁶⁴ BLD¹. vol. I, n. 263: 269, n. 872: 414-415; YTB². vol. VII, n. 1263: 8; Zayd b. Hâritha and Abû Râfi' were sent to fetch Muhammad's wife Sawda as well as Umm Kulthûm and Fâtima.

⁶⁵ YTB². vol. VIII, n. 1640: 179, n. 1641: 181. Among the Shî'a cf. MFD¹. vol. I: 136; TBR¹.: 110; HLL¹.: 250. Cf. al-Mûsawî, M.B. *al-Kawthar*, vol. III, Part 3, bb. 2 *Fâtima wa-hijratu-hâ ilâ Madîna*, n. 3/2118: 380-381, where the incident is mentioned (although the author misspells the name and offers no sources). Al-Huwayrith is named as one of the horsemen sent by the Quraysh to expel 'Alî and the women who were with him: he approached the camel on which Fâtima, already emaciated by the death of her mother and other events preceding her father's leaving for Medina, was riding, and she was thrown to the ground. Later, al-Huwayrith was killed by 'Alî.

■ **c. 2/624 or 3/625**, the marriage of ‘Alī and Fâtima (according to the Sunnî scholars): Fâtima would consequently have been nineteen or twenty at this time. The Sunnî historian al-Tabarî, in harmony with some other scholars, places their marriage just before the end of the month of *Safar* in 1/623, before the battles of Badr and Uhud (the latter was fought in 3/625).⁶⁶ Al-‘Isâmî transmits more than one strand, suggesting that the marriage was either in the second or third year of the *hijra*, some saying before the battle of Uhud, others saying before Muhammad married ‘Â’isha, when Fâtima was fifteen and ‘Alī twenty-one.⁶⁷ ‘Abd al-Barr agrees with the ages, but places the marriage after Uhud.⁶⁸

■ **c. 10/632**, the death of Muhammad, aged about sixty-three,⁶⁹ followed by that of Fâtima. Here, the discrepancies between the transmitters are narrowed down to a matter of months. While all agree that she died shortly after her father (in the eleventh year of the *hijra*, many say, although technically it is the tenth), the Traditions about the timing range between seventy-five days and six months, and her age at her death ranges between twenty-three and thirty-five.⁷⁰

While the age of the sources and the shortage of source critical studies go some way in explaining the discrepancies and lack of precision among the Sunnî biographers, historians and transmit-

⁶⁶ YTB². vol. VII, n. 1273: 18, vol. VII, n. 1367: 92, vol. VII, n. 1273: 18, vol. XXXIX, nn. 2434-2437: 166-169; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sahâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4807: 185; JWZ². vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*. 2; DHB¹. vol. I: 4; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4434: 441; MTQ. vol. V: 99; ISM. vol. I, bb. 5: 425; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhikr manâqib ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 43.

⁶⁷ NSA².: 5; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*: 520; ISM. vol. I, bb. 5: 425.

⁶⁸ BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4057: 1893. Cf. also ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*: 520; KTR². vol. VI: 332.

⁶⁹ BUK². vol. V, bk. 58 (*Kitâb manâqib al-ansâr*), ch. 44, n. 243: 156, vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 83, n. 742: 528.

⁷⁰ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 29; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 865: 402; ISH. vol. II, bb. 133 *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 40, 42-43; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ’ wa kunâ-bunna*, n. 4057: 1894, 1898-1899; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 71: 128; JWZ². vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 5; ATH¹. vol. II: 230-231; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*: 524; DHB¹. vol. I: 13; KTR¹. vol. V: 250, 285, vol. VI: 332-334; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4434: 441.

ters, the counterviews of the Shī'a scholars bring further uncertainty. The Shī'a reject many of these Sunnī dates and calculations, insisting that Fâtima was born five years after the first revelations, having been conceived after the 'night journey': in this, they base themselves on a Tradition which will be scrutinized more closely in a later chapter. According to the Tradition, transmitted by Shī'a (and some Sunnī scholars), Muhammad, in the course of this 'night journey' was given heavenly fruit to eat by Jibrīl,⁷¹ and upon his return had intercourse with Khadīja, who conceived Fâtima, ostensibly as a result of the heavenly fruit which had become sperm in Muhammad's loins. Suffice it to say that some, but not all the Sunnī scholars who transmit this Tradition, seem unconcerned by the problems it causes for dating Fâtima's birth.⁷² Al-Jawzī and al-Khawârizmī carry two versions of the Tradition, one of which places the eating of the heavenly fruit not during the 'night journey' but during a private visit to Muhammad by Jibrīl, a version which causes fewer difficulties in the process of dating events. The Shī'a

⁷¹ The dominant figure in Islamic angelology, he is mentioned by name three times in the Qur'ân (Q. 2: 97-98, 66: 4), which also refers to him as 'the Faithful Spirit' (*al-rûb al-amîn*, Q. 26: 193, which Pickthall translates as 'True Spirit'), 'the Spirit of holiness' (*rûb al-qudus*, Q. 2: 87, 16: 102, erroneously translated by Pickthall and others as 'the holy Spirit') and 'Our Spirit' (*rûba-nâ*, Q. 19: 17). In a number of other verses, he is implied, but given neither name nor epithet (Q. 53: 5-18, 81: 19-25). Cf. Carra de Vaux, B. "Djibrâ'îl." In *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by H.A.R. Gibb et al., 79-80. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995. Throughout the Islamic corpus of Shī'a and Sunnī Tradition, the name that we are accustomed to translate as 'Gabriel' is written in a variety of ways: sometimes 'Jibrīl', at other times 'Jibra'îl' and occasional 'Jibrâ'îl'. Unless the text dictates otherwise, I have attempted to use 'Jibrīl' throughout.

⁷² HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sahâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4801: 183-184 (with an annotation of rejection by al-Dhahabî in the notes); BGD. vol. V, n. 2481: 87; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zahrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 33: 105, n. 46: 110-111; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*: 411-413 (who condemns the Tradition as absolutely false); RHB.: 36, 44-45; SQL². vol. V, n. 541: 160 (with a warning note that Fâtima's birth and Khadīja's death were both pre-'night journey', rendering the Tradition impossible); SFI. vol. II, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ'*: 184; SYT. vol. IV, *Sûrat al-isrâ'*: 282; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 202; MTQ. vol. V: 97; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dbiker manâqib 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 42.

historians date the ‘night journey’ as do their Sunnî counterparts, close to the *hijra*: going by the older Traditions, the Shî‘a idea (that she was born five years after the prophetic call and three years after the ‘night journey’) becomes quite credible. But failing to utilize this, the Shî‘a resort to introducing a second ‘night journey’.

The Shî‘a scholar al-Majlisî holds that Fâtima was born in Mecca on 20TH *Jumâdâ al-âkbira*, five years after the prophetic call and three years after the ‘night journey’, when the Quraysh were reconstructing the *Ka‘ba*.⁷³ these details are in harmony with almost all the Shî‘a transmitters,⁷⁴ and with the two prominent Shî‘a historians, al-Ya‘qûbî and al-Mas‘ûdî. Al-Ya‘qûbî insists that Fâtima was born after the start of the prophecy, while her siblings (al-Qâsim, Ruqayya, Zaynab, and Umm Kulthûm) were all born before it.⁷⁵

Going by the traditional dates, the Shî‘a position is untenable: in order to make their case, they would have either to change the date of Khadîja’s death (an unlikely option, since the event of a physical death, especially of one so prominent, is not hard to verify), or to change the date of the ‘night journey’ (an easier option, since it is more difficult to date precisely what is purportedly some sort of mystical experience). In fact, the Shî‘a do neither. In terms of the date of Fâtima’s birth, they claim that the Sunnî have falsified the date in order to play down the importance of Muhammad’s daughter (and thus the ‘people of the house’ and their claims: the Sunnî portrayal of Fâtima’s relatively late marriage at the age of eighteen suggests that she was not as desirable as the Shî‘a claim) in favor of ‘Â’isha, as well as to demystify her origins by discrediting the story of the heavenly fruit. This in itself is surprising, since a number of Sunnî transmitters carry the story and, while most of them reject the Tradition, they do so on account of dating Fâtima’s birth before the night journey rather than explicitly on account of the mystical fruit. The Shî‘a resolve their dilemma not by changing dates, but by positing that there was more than one journey by Muhammad to Heaven:

⁷³ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 1, nn. 7, 8: 6-7.

⁷⁴ KLY. vol. I, bk. 3 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *Mawlid al-Zabrâ’ Fâtima*: 458; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 405.

⁷⁵ YQB. vol. II: 19.

“Abû Basîr asked Abû ‘Abd Allâh⁷⁶ (and I was present): May I be made your ransom! How many times was the Messenger of God made to ascend? He answered: ‘Twice.’⁷⁷

While in essence the more ancient theory of the ‘night journey’ being much closer to Muhammad’s prophetic calling would accord with the Shî’a dating of Fâtima’s birth, al-Kulaynî and the others are referring to an entirely different mystical event. This added event is the only possible way of explaining how she could have been conceived when Muhammad returned from the ‘night journey’ and the eating of mystical fruit, and yet only be born two years after that (that is, five years after Muhammad’s prophetic call).⁷⁸ Fâtima is thus, according to the Shî’a, born around 615, a whole ten years later than Sunnî reckonings, making her about seven or eight years of age when she was betrothed to ‘Alî (within the first year of the *hijra*)⁷⁹ and seventeen or eighteen when she died.

Hagiography notwithstanding, the life of Fâtima would dishearten most biographers. Apart from the elaborate theology constructed around her life in the Shî’a (and some Sunnî) books of Tradition, we know practically nothing. That she lived close to her father, surviving him briefly and producing numerous descendents for him, and that she has a certain historical substance because of her husband and sons are all reasons for her prominence. So writes Veccia Vaglieri: and yet, she notes further, Fâtima remained on the fringes of early Islam’s important events, receiving negligible attention in the earliest historical sources.⁸⁰ The sporadic attempts to unearth the authentic Fâtima led to Lammens’ depressing portrait of an unattractive, mediocre and ill-treated woman, gloomy and

⁷⁶ The sixth Imâm, Abû ‘Abd Allâh Ja’far b. Muhammad al-Sâdiq (d. 147/765).

⁷⁷ KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *Mawlid al-nabî*, n. 13: 442-443. Cf also: MJL. vol. XVIII, bb. 3, n. 13: 356; TST¹: 550.

⁷⁸ KFM¹. Part 42: 511. He places her birth two years rather than five years after the prophetic call, in order to solve the problem of her conception when Muhammad returned from the heavens.

⁷⁹ YQB. vol. II: 42; MSD. vol. III, bb. 72, n. 1485: 22-23, bb. 73, n. 1486: 27-28.

⁸⁰ Veccia Vaglieri, L. “Fâtima”: 841.

insignificant, and to Massignon's over-enthusiastic attempt to beatify her: neither really succeeds. Following circumspectly the Shī'a dating system and the books of Tradition, we can underscore a few recorded historical events in her life that shed some light on her personality and status.

She was born, by Shī'a accounts, around 615, when her mother Khadija was over fifty years of age, a factor which appears to present no real problem. A number of incidents have reached us from her childhood: one, prescient of things to come, was her extreme grief over the death of her mother,⁸¹ although her grief over the death of Hamza, Muhammad's uncle, at the battle of Uhud, appears even more conspicuous.⁸² Another is her comforting of her father and cleaning him when an opponent throws dirt over him while he is praying,⁸³ and weeping impotently over the Quraysh plots against Muhammad.⁸⁴ In spite of Veccia Vaglieri's assertion that she remained on the fringes of early Islam's important events, the name of Fâtima is associated with a number of occasions: one was her tending of her father's wounds and the washing of swords after the battle of Uhud and her subsequent habit of going to pray at graves of Hamza and others killed in the battle.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Among the Shī'a, cf. YQB. vol. II: 35; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 116: 404; RWD¹. vol. II; 529; MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 5, n. 6: 3, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 31: 27-28.

⁸² al-Mūsawī, M.B. *al-Kawthar*, vol. V, Part 12, bb. 2 *Bakkā' Fâtima 'alā Hamza sayyid al-shuhadā'*, n. 1/3211: 158-159; al-Qazwīnī, M. *Fâtima al-Zahrā' min al-mahd ilā al-lahd*: 98-99. Fâtima went every Saturday morning to the graves of the martyrs and at Hamza's grave would plead God's mercy and pardon for him. Cf. MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 4, n. 13: 90.

⁸³ HNB. vol. II, *Musnad 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd*, n. 3722: 44, n. 3962: 95; BUK¹. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitāb al-wudū'*), ch. 73, n. 241: 151, vol. I, bk. 9 (*Kitāb sūtra al-musallā*), ch. 20, n. 449: 295, vol. IV, bk. 52 (*Kitāb al-jihād*), ch. 98, n. 185: 113-114, vol. IV, bk. 53 (*Kitāb fard al-khums*), ch. 40, n. 409: 274, vol. V, bk. 58 (*Kitāb manāqib al-ansār*), ch. 28, n. 193: 122; MSL. vol. III, bk. 32 (*Kitāb al-jihād*), bb. 39, nn. 107, 108: 1418-1419; BLD¹. vol. I, n. 251: 125.

⁸⁴ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās*, n. 2762: 649-650, n. 3485: 788.

⁸⁵ HSH. vol. II: 80 (which has 'Alī bringing the water and Muhammad washing his own face, omitting all reference to Fâtima); HNB. vol. VIII, *Hadīth Abī Malik Sabl b. Sa'd al-Shā'adī*, n. 22863: 425, n. 22892: 432; BUK¹. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitāb al-wudū'*), ch. 76, n. 224: 153, vol. IV, bk. 52

We also read of the imploration by Abû Sufyân of her and ‘Alî’s intercession when Mecca was threatened with occupation: Abû Sufyân implores ‘Alî’s intercession, which he refuses. Fâtima is present with baby al-Hasan, and Abû Sufyân asks Fâtima for her son’s intercession, which she refuses. In the accounts of al-Tabarî, al-Balâdhurî and Ibn Hishâm, contrary to Veccia Vaglieri’s intimation, Abû Sufyân does not actually ask Fâtima’s intercession:

“Abû Sufyân then turned to Fâtimah and said, ‘Daughter of Muhammad, don’t you want to command your little son here to make peace among the people, so that he will be lord of the Arabs forever?’ ‘By God,’ she said, ‘my little son is not old enough to make peace among the people, and no-one can do so against the will of the Messenger of God.’”⁸⁶

Her refusal of her son’s intercession is an augury of things to come: her later position as intercessor is demarcated by some sources as pertaining only to the sinners of her father’s community, although the Shî‘a transmitters, as we shall see, widen the scope of her mediation. But it is an intercession that is at once positive and negative: for while she pleads on behalf of the aforementioned sinners, she also has the power not only to refuse to intercede for some, but also to ask that certain people be punished by God.

Her performance of the Minor Pilgrimage (*‘umra*) around 10/632 is also recorded: it was almost certainly on this occasion that, upon leaving Mecca, the now orphaned and hysterical daughter of Hamza was placed into Fâtima’s care by ‘Alî, an act that

(*Kitâb al-jihâd*), ch. 80, n. 152: 98-99, ch. 85, n. 159: 102-103, ch. 163, n. 274: 170, vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 23, n. 402: 277-278, vol. VII, bk. 62 (*Kitâb al-nikâh*), ch. 124, n. 175: 126, vol. VII, bk. 71 (*Kitâb al-tibb*), ch. 27, n. 618: 415-416; MSL. vol. III, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-jihâd*), bb. 37, n. 101: 1416; TRM. vol. VI, bk. 29 (*Kitâb al-tibb*), bb. 34, n. 2086: 271; BLD¹. vol. I, n. 703: 324; YTB². vol. VII, n. 1426: 137. Among the Shî‘a, cf. MJL. vol. 43, bb. 4, n. 13: 90.

⁸⁶ HSH. vol. II: 263; BLD². n. 130: 42; YTB². vol. VIII, nn. 1623-1624: 164-165: Cf. Veccia Vaglieri, L. “Fâtima”: 841.

would later lead him into a dispute with Zayd and Ja‘far over who was ultimately responsible for the child.⁸⁷

Her role in the famous *mubâhala* incident well documented by the Sunnî transmitters. The context of the *mubâhala* Tradition is the visit of the delegation of Monophysite⁸⁸ Christians from Najrân (south of Mecca) to Muhammad. After lengthy discussions, no agreement was reached on the position and standing of Jesus. At the end of the discussions, Muhammad suggested that the two sides engage in *mubâhala*, the invocation of a mutual imprecation or divine malediction for the side which was lying. The following verse was held to have come down in this regard:

«And whoso disputeth with thee concerning him, after the knowledge which hath come unto thee, say (unto him): Come! We will summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, then we will pray humbly (to our Lord) and (solemnly) invoke the curse of Allah upon those who lie» (Q. 3: 61).

The Islamic account posits that the 10TH or 24TH of the month of *Dhû al-Hijja* was chosen for the ‘mutual imprecation’. Muhammad ordered that in a field outside Medina, a thin black cloak be used as a shade between two trees. The Christians of Najrân stood on one side of the field: on the other side, Muhammad, together with ‘Alî, Fâtima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn came from the direction of Medina to the shade, where they stood below the cloak. Muhammad recited Q. 33: 33 and addressed the ‘people of the house’ saying that he would invoke malediction for them and that they should say ‘amen’.⁸⁹ Seeing such glory and grandeur, the Najrân chiefs ostensibly lost their self-confidence and felt that they could not stand against Muhammad and his household. They therefore accepted to

⁸⁷ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 770: 212, n. 931: 254; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 42, n. 553: 387-389, vol. III, bk. 49 (*Kitâb al-sulak*), ch. 6, n. 863: 536-538.

⁸⁸ Those who taught that in the person of Jesus Christ there is only one nature, and not two – human and divine – as upheld by the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

⁸⁹ QRT. vol. IV: 104.

pay the 'protection tax' (*jizya*), signing a peace treaty with 'Alî (on behalf of Muhammad).

The *mubâhala* Tradition, highlighting the presence of 'Alî, Fâtima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn as the family of Muhammad, has been recounted in various Sunnî collections with diverse wording, for example, in al-Nîsâbûrî, who relates:

"On the authority of 'Âmir b. Sa'd, on the authority of his father, who said: When this verse came down: «*We will summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves*» (*Âl 'Imrân*, v. 61), the Messenger of God, may God bless and save him and his family, summoned 'Alî, Fâtima, Hasan, and Husayn and said: O God, these are my people."⁹⁰

The Shî'a insist that the marriage of 'Alî and Fâtima took place within the first year of the *hijra*.⁹¹ A number of accounts show that both Abû Bakr and 'Uthmân asked unsuccessfully for her hand,⁹² refused by Muhammad because he was 'waiting on God': the Shî'a are adamant that he already had his instructions, and that God had

⁹⁰ TRM. vol. VIII, bk. 48 (*Kitâb tafsîr al-qur'ân*), bb. 2, n. 3002: 182, vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), *Manâqib 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, bb. 67, n. 3726: 307-308. Cf. also HNB. vol. I, *Musnad Abî Isbâq Sa'd b. Abî Wiqâs*, n. 1608: 391; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 4 *Fadâ'il 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 32: 1871; BLD¹. n. 199: 77; HNA. vol. III, Part 3, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rîfat al-sahâba*), *Manâqib ahl bayt al-nabî*, n. 4782: 176; ZMR, vol. I, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 61: 283; QID. vol. VII, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 4 *Min fadâ'il 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 42: 412-413; AKR. vol. 42: 16, 112; RAZ. vol. VIII, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 61: 85, 87-88; QRT. vol. IV: 104; BDW. Part 3, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 61: 76; SHL. bb. 3 *Fî dhikr manâqib al-Hasan wa-l-Husayn*: 100.

⁹¹ ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*: 520. It is said to have been after the battle of Uhud, although it is noted that others say it was before Muhammad married 'Â'isha, and that Fâtima was fifteen years of age at the time of the marriage. Among the Shî'a, cf. YQB. vol. II: 42; MSD. vol. III, bb. 72, n. 1485: 22-23, bb. 73, n. 1486: 27-28.

⁹² SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 20; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*: 520; MTQ. vol. V: 98-99; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 864: 402-403.

ordered him to marry Fâtima to ‘Alî, in a Tradition that occurs with diverse wording in both Sunnî and Shî‘a collections:

“The Messenger of God said: ‘Alî, God, may He be exalted, has married you to Fâtima.”⁹³

Among the Shî‘a transmitters, Muhammad receives this order during one of his two ‘night journeys’,⁹⁴ while among the Sunnî, al-Jawzî rejects it as absolutely false (*mawdû‘*).⁹⁵ In his *Sunan*, al-Nasâ‘î records a Tradition that Muhammad’s refusal of Abû Bakr and ‘Uthmân was by reason of Fâtima’s extreme youth,⁹⁶ but the Shî‘a transmitters, noting Muhammad’s own marriage to an exceedingly young ‘Â’isha, reject this.⁹⁷

The Shî‘a transmitters further stress the inevitability of the marriage through a Tradition expressed in a conditional sentence with a double hypothesis, and worded, in terms of the Arabic grammar, with an unreal hypothesis, suggesting that anything else would have been impossible:

“He said: Had God, may He be exalted, not created Fâtima for ‘Alî, there would not have been anyone suitable for her on the face of the earth from Âdam and those after him.”⁹⁸

⁹³ Alternative versions read: “O ‘Alî, God has ordered me to marry you to Fâtima.” KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 25: 101, n. 36: 106, n. 38: 107, n. 57: 120, n. 65: 125; AKR. vol. 42: 126-131; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî dhikr tazwîj Fâtima bi-‘Alî*: 415-416, 418-419; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-jâ’*: 520; RHB.: 30-33; SFI. vol. II, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 180; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 204; MTQ. vol. V: 97; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhikr manâqib ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 43.

⁹⁴ Cf. al-Mûsawî, M.B. *al-Kawthar*, vol. III, Part 3, bb. 4 *Laylat al-mi‘raj wa-l-wasiyya ilâ rasûl Allâh fî tazwîj ‘Alî min Fâtima*, n. 1/2156: 405.

⁹⁵ JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî dhikr tazwîj Fâtima bi-‘Alî*: 415-416, 418-419.

⁹⁶ NSA¹. vol. VI, bk. 26 (*Kitâb al-nikâh*), bb. *Tazawwuj al-mar’a*: 62; NSA²: 84-85.

⁹⁷ Cf. al-Qazwînî, M. *Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 103.

⁹⁸ Among the Shî‘a cf. RTB¹: 10; RTB²: 139; SDQ¹. n. 18: 592; SDQ³. vol. III, bb. *al-Akfâ’*, n. 4383: 393; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 3: 414; SDQ⁵. vol. I, bb. 21, n. 3: 225; FNR. vol. I: 148; TBR¹. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 3: 178; IRB. vol. I: 463; HRR¹. vol. XX, bb. 27, n. 25067: 84; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb.

‘Alî had vacillated in asking her hand (despite the encouragement of his family, who reminded him of his closeness to Muhammad) because of his extreme poverty, and because two other suitors, important men, had been refused.⁹⁹ He might have been disconcerted had he witnessed Fâtima’s response to her father’s announcement that she would marry him: some Traditions posit a stony silence (and thus a tacit agreement), while others portray a distraught Fâtima protesting loudly and having to be calmed by her father with assurances that ‘Alî was his best man.¹⁰⁰

2, n. 1: 10; bb. 5, n. 3: 92-93; bb. 5, n. 6: 97; bb. 5, n. 22: 107-108. Among the Sunnî, cf. KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zahrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 38: 107;

⁹⁹ SCD. vol. X, *Dhîker banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 20-22; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 865: 402-403; AKR. vol. 42: 127; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*: 520.

¹⁰⁰ HNB. vol. VII, *Hadîth Ma’qil b. Yasâr*, n. 20329: 287-288; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*: 520; HAY. vol. IX: 102; MTQ. vol. V: 98. Among the Shî’a, a number of transmitters portray her weeping both at the proposal of the marriage, as well as after it. The latter is almost always qualified as a weeping over the poverty of her husband: the former is not always clarified. Ibn Shahrâshûb tells us that, upon the announcement of the marriage, some of the local women told Fâtima that some of the Quraysh women were saying her father was marrying her off to an indigent. When Fâtima asks her father if this is true, Muhammad insists that not only is this not true, but also that ‘Alî was the first to embrace Islam and is greater than all the rest in knowledge and discernment. Cf. RTB²: 116, 174; SDQ¹. n. 2: 439; SDQ⁴: 120; MFD¹. vol. I: 36; FNR. vol. I: 112; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ’*: 392; IRB. vol. I: 149, 350, 363, 368, 370; HLL²: 195, 316 (situated after the marriage: cf. also JQM.: 120); MJL. vol. XXXVIII, bb. 56, n. 36: 19, vol. XL, bb. 91, n. 34: 17, vol. XLIII, bb. 5, n. 33: 135, n. 36: 140, bb. 6, n. 6: 149. In this connection, al-Kulaynî transmits a curious Tradition, also found in other transmitters: “When the Messenger of God married ‘Alî to Fâtima, he came to her and she was crying. He said to her: What are these tears of yours? By God, if in my family there were one better than ‘Alî, I would not marry you to him. But as it is, it is not I who am marrying him to you: God is marrying you to him, and fixes for you one-fifth as long as the heavens and the earth continue.” Cf. KLY. vol. V, bk. 18 (*Kitâb al-nikâh*), bb. *Mâ tazannaj ‘alay-hi amîr al-mu’minîn Fâtima*, n. 6: 378; TFA². bb. 2, n. 14-45: 40; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 5, n. 5: 94, n. 43: 144. The Tradition, while boosting the status of ‘Alî, never quite explains why Fâtima should be crying over the

Numerous Traditions tell of ‘Alī’s dowry problems: some sources name an amount of money, while most speak of his dowry in terms of his meager possessions – some old armor (from the field of Badr, add some Traditions, suggesting that the marriage was after the battle), a shield, a threadbare ram skin and the like.¹⁰¹ While later Shī‘a Traditions take up the theme of Fâtima’s own dower being, rather than a common and paltry sum of money, her position as intercessor for the sinners of her father’s community, Ibn Hanbal records that her father gave her a dress of velvet, a skin pillow stuffed with palm fibers, two millstones, two earthenware jars and a waterskin.¹⁰² The marriage itself could not, as some sources assert, have been consummated after the battle of Badr,¹⁰³ since their first child al-Hasan was born in the second year of the *hijra*, followed, fifty days after his birth, by the conception of his brother al-Husayn.¹⁰⁴

planned marriage. The reference to the ‘one-fifth’ (the reference is to her bridal dower, and to the one-fifth tax, based on Q. 8: 41, which was orientated towards the needy and the orphans) suggests a serious worry over the finances of her husband-to-be. In Ibn Shahrâshûb’s transmission, when she questions her father about whether he is marrying her to an indigent, Muhammad, while praising ‘Alī’s virtues, contradicts the charge that he is poor. In reality, the poverty of ‘Alī and therefore of Fâtima’s household is clearly demonstrated by a number of Shī‘a texts, which transmit Traditions of Fâtima and her children weeping with hunger. Cf. for e.g. SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ*: 319; MJL. vol. XXIV, bb. 36, n. 6: 99, vol. XLIII, bb. 5, n. 30: 120.

¹⁰¹ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 20-22; BUK¹. vol. III, bk. 34 (*Kitâb al-buyû*), ch. 29, n. 302: 171, vol. IV, bk. 53 (*Kitâb fard al-kehums*), ch. 1, n. 324: 206, vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 11, n. 340: 226-227; ADD. vol. I, bk. 12 (*Kitâb al-nikâh*), bb. 35: 490-491, vol. II, bk. 19 (*Kitâb al-keharâj*), bb. 20: 134; BLD¹. vol. I, n. 865: 402; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-jâ*, n. 830: 366; MTQ. vol. V: 98.

¹⁰² HNB. vol. I, *Musnad ‘Alī b. Abī Tâlib*, n. 643: 183, n. 715: 200, n. 819: 223, n. 838: 227-228, n. 853: 231.

¹⁰³ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 23: it is posited here that the marriage took place five months after the *hijra* and was consummated when ‘Alī returned from the battle of Badr and when Fâtima was eighteen years old.

¹⁰⁴ BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 864: 404; YTB². vol. VII, n. 1431: 142 posits that al-Hasan was born in the third year of the *hijra* (thus c. 625), with al-Husayn conceived fifty days later: but in the same volume,

The introductory notes of the English edition of ‘Alī’s sermons and letters (*Nahj al-balâgha*), by Sayed Mohamed Askari Jafery, offer the following enthused description of their married life:

“He had been betrothed to her several days before the expedition to Bader. But the marriage was celebrated three months later, Hazrath Ali being in his 21ST year and Hazrath Fatima in 15TH year (*sic*) of her life (The Spirit of Islam). It was very happy marriage (*sic*). The transcendental distinctiveness of their individual characters blended so well with each other that they never quarreled and complained of one another and led a happy and contented life. Each one of them was rich in his own rights; Fatima was the only heir of one of the richest women of Arabia, Khadija, and had inherited many orchards and gardens in Mecca and Madina, besides that she was the daughter of the head of a rich clan and a king of a fast growing kingdom. Ali was a marshal who had very handsome shares from the spoils of war. Yet all that they owned went to the poor, cripples and orphans, and they themselves often starved. Their only luxury in life was prayers, and the company of each other and their children; and they willingly shared the sorrows and suffering of poor (*sic*). They were given a slave girl, Fizza, but the Holy prophet (A.S.) had made arrangement that every alternate day was the off day of Fizza and her mistress would do all the household work. Even when Hazrath Fatima was ill on Fizza’s off day, Fizza would not be allowed to tend to the duties, but Hazrath Ali would work...During the life time of Hazrath Fatima

n. 1367: 91, he concedes that some hold al-Hasan to have been born in the second year of the *hijra*.

(A.S.) Hazrath Ali did not marry another woman.”¹⁰⁵

The final sentence of this adulatory passage calls for comment. While the Shī’a and a number of the Sunnī transmitters (including al-Tabarī) insist that ‘Alī married no other woman until the death of Fâtima,¹⁰⁶ an inexplicable Tradition is found recorded by Ibn Hanbal and al-Bukhârî:¹⁰⁷ Muhammad gives to ‘Alī a suit made of silk, but grows inexplicably angry when ‘Alī subsequently wears it. ‘Alī decides to divide the suit up “among my women” (*bayna nisâ’i*). In terms of content, the Tradition is perplexing: why would Muhammad make such a gift and then grow angry when it was used? Muslim reports Muhammad as saying: “I did not send it to you to wear it, but to divide it among the women as a head covering.”¹⁰⁸ Lammens, no less puzzlingly, translates the Arabic *nisâ’i* as ‘my wives’ and thinks that these words were spoken by ‘Alī in a moment when he “forgets himself”,¹⁰⁹ insinuating that he had other wives whose existence was hidden from Fâtima. This is untenable, considering not only the weight of evidence (that ‘Alī had no other wives while Fâtima was alive), but also the fact that Lammens has mistranslated *nisâ’i*, which more generally means ‘my women’. The greater possibility is that ‘Alī is speaking generically of the women in his life, referring in all probability to his wife Fâtima, his daughters Zaynab and Umm Kulthûm, and his own mother Fâtima. The

¹⁰⁵ Reza, A, trans. *Peak of Eloquence. Nahjul Balagha*: 15-16.

¹⁰⁶ Amongst the Sunnī, cf. for e.g. NSA²: 5; YTB². vol XVII, n. 3470: 227; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4057: 1894; KTR¹. vol. VI: 333; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4434: 441. Among the Shī’a cf. MSD. vol. III, bb. 73, n. 1496: 31. The reason put forward by the Shī’a for ‘Alī’s monogamy is that Fâtima was pure and did not menstruate (and was thus incomparable with other women). Even in Paradise, when other men can take the ‘maidens of Paradise’ as their brides, no such option will be open to ‘Alī: in Paradise, Fâtima will be his only wife. Cf. SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 372.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn HNB. vol. I, *Musnad ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 963: 253 (where the intimation is that it is Muhammad’s and not ‘Alī’s women being spoken of), n. 1185: 289-290 (where the women are qualified as Fâtima and ‘Alī’s aunts); BUK¹. vol. III, bk. 72 (*Kitâb al-libâs*), ch. 30, n. 731: 487-488.

¹⁰⁸ MSL. vol. III, bk. 37 (*Kitâb al-libâs*), bb. 2, n. 17: 1644.

¹⁰⁹ Lammens, H. “Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad”: 235.

first of the two texts offered by Ibn Hanbal intimates this, making a clear distinction between Fâtima and the other women (“he sent one to Fâtima and divided the other between his women”),¹¹⁰ while the second qualifies that one of the women is Fâtima and the other is definitely not another wife (“between Fâtima and his aunt”).¹¹¹

It is certain that, at least for the first few years of their marriage, and before the occupation of the Khaybar oasis, ‘Alî and Fâtima lived in a fairly severe poverty (“all we had” claimed ‘Alî, “was a sheep skin”, which served both as a bed and a working mat)¹¹² that was by no means self-induced, so that sometimes there was nothing to eat and their children cried from hunger.¹¹³ Lam-mens wonders why Muhammad, who he claims was surely rich, did not assist them: but it is debatable whether Muhammad was particularly wealthy before the occupation of the Khaybar (a rich oasis inhabited by Jewish tribes, and conquered by Muhammad in about 6/628, who then distributed some of his one-fifth share, a considerable yield of land and produce, among his wives and family).¹¹⁴ Ibn Hanbal records a Tradition in which Fâtima gives her father some bread – the first he has eaten in three days – which suggests otherwise.¹¹⁵

Despite the claims of Jafery, there was apparently no servant, at least at the beginning, and Fâtima was reduced to exhaustion through much menial work, as was, it seems, ‘Alî. Her request for a servant from her father, in most accounts at the suggestion of ‘Alî, was met with his teaching her and her husband a set of prayers to say at night (‘God is the greatest’ thirty-four times, ‘praise be to

¹¹⁰ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 963: 253.

¹¹¹ Ibid. vol. I, *Musnad ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 1185: 289-290.

¹¹² BLD¹. vol. I, n. 865: 402.

¹¹³ S^CD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 22-24; HNB. vol. IV, *Musnad Anas b. Mâlik*, n. 12526: 302; ADD. vol. II, bk. 31 (*Kitâb al-libâs*), bb. 32, n. 383, bk. 10 (*Kitâb al-luqta*), bb. 16: 398; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 19: 97-98; JWZ². vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl*: 3; MTQ. vol. V: 56.

¹¹⁴ Vecchia Vaglieri, L. “Khaybar”: 1137-1143.

¹¹⁵ HNB. vol. IV, *Musnad Anas b. Mâlik*, n. 13222: 425. Among the Shî’a cf. SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 123: 40; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 381; HRR¹. vol. XXV, bb. 10, n. 31055: 25; MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 9, n. 28: 225, vol. XX, bb. 17, n. 10: 245, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 41: 40.

God' and 'God be praised' thirty-three times).¹¹⁶ At least one Sunni transmitter records that Muhammad did in fact give Fâtima a servant,¹¹⁷ while Ibn Hanbal has Muhammad teaching the couple these prayers without them having asked for a servant.¹¹⁸ The enigmatic refusal by Muhammad of Fâtima's ostensibly warranted request takes the form of a stylized and didactic genre: that Fâtima needs a servant is not finally the point, for more important is the use of the event as an opportunity to teach the pre-eminence of prayer. Christian exegetes may find examples of a not dissimilar pedagogy in the Gospels: one of these is recorded in Lk. 11: 27-28 in which someone cries out to Jesus, «*Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that suckled you!*» His disconcerting reply – «*More blessed is the one who hears the word of God and keeps it*» – is, classical exegesis insists, not finally a denigration of his mother, but the use of a particular occasion as an oblique allusion to the fact that it was not her motherhood, but her (and anybody else's) obedience to God's word that made her blessed.

Examples of a comparable pedagogy appear in events such as Muhammad's proclamation that: "Were Fâtima the daughter of Muhammad to steal, I would cut her hand off."¹¹⁹ This suggests no

¹¹⁶ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 25-26; HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 604: 174, n. 740: 206, n. 838: 227-228, n. 996: 260, n. 1141: 287, n. 1249: 309, vol. X, *Hadîth Umm Salama*, n. 26613: 187, vol. II, *Musnad 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 1228: 295, vol. X, *Musnad 'Abd Allâh b. 'Amr b. al-'Âs*, n. 6554: 82 which has Muhammad teaching 'Alî and Fâtima these bedtime prayers outside of the context of their asking for a servant; BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 53 (*Kitâb fard al-khums*), ch. 6, n. 344: 221-222, vol. VII, bk. 64 (*Kitâb al-nafaqât*), ch. 6, n. 274: 210, ch. 7, n. 275: 211, vol. VIII, bk. 75 (*Kitâb al-da'wât*), ch. 11, n. 330: 222-223, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-asbâb*), ch. 10, n. 55: 46; ADD. vol. II, bk. 19 (*Kitâb al-kharâj*), bb. 20: 135, bk. 40 (*Kitâb al-adab*), bb. 100: 609-610; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 49 (*Kitâb al-da'wât*), bb. 24, nn. 3405-3406: 112-113; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4787: 178; ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 41; KTR¹. vol. VI: 332-333.

¹¹⁷ ADD. vol. II, bk. 31 (*Kitâb al-libâs*), bb. 32, n. 383.

¹¹⁸ HNB. vol. II, *Musnad 'Abd Allâh b. 'Amr b. al-'Âs*, n. 6565: 567-568.

¹¹⁹ HNB. vol. V, *Musnad Jâbir b. 'Abd Allâh*, n. 15151: 194, n. 15249: 210, vol. IX, *Musnad 'Â'isha*, n. 24193: 289, n. 25352: 510-511; BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 55 (*Kitâb abâdât al-anbiyâ*), ch. 46, n. 681: 453, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb*

disparagement of Fâtima, but underscores that even one as exalted as the daughter of the Prophet is not exempt from Divine Law. In the case of Fâtima, the absence of disparagement is further underlined by the grammar employed in the expression of the 'Tradition: it is a conditional sentence with a double hypothesis, expressed in terms of an unreal hypothesis, that is, something that could never conceivably happen.

Lammens uses this Tradition as an argument in his thesis that Fâtima had no special place or rank in the life of her father: but he has failed to understand the thrust behind the grammar, so that his contention is without merit.¹²⁰ Eventually, both Fâtima and her husband received shares in the Khaybar.¹²¹ 'Alî built a house not far from Muhammad's, but Fâtima wanted to be nearer her father, so that finally a Medinan named Hâritha b. al-Nu'mân gave them his.¹²² This increase in prosperity may be aligned to a Tradition carried by a number of major Sunnî transmitters:

"On the authority of 'Â'isha, who said: When (the verse) «*And warn thy tribe of near kindred*» came down (*Sûrat al-shu'arâ'* [26] verse 214), the Messenger of God stood up and said: Fâtima daughter of Muhammad! Safiyya, daughter of 'Abd al-Muttalib! Children of 'Abd al-Muttalib! I have

fadâ'il al-ashâb), ch. 19, n. 79: 58-59, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 52, n. 597: 416, vol. VIII, bk. 81 (*Kitâb al-hudûd*), ch. 12, n. 778: 512, ch. 13, n. 779: 512-513; RAZ. vol. XII, Part 23, *Sûrat al-nûr*: 148. The Shî'a transmitter Ibn Shahrâshûb adds a curious aside to this narrative. When Muhammad spoke these words, Fâtima overheard him and grieved over them. Jibrîl then descended from Heaven and revealed Q. 39: 65 («*And verily it hath been revealed unto thee as unto those before thee (saying): If thou ascribe a partner to Allah thy work will fail and thou indeed wilt be among the losers.*» Muhammad in turn is grieved by these words, and Jibrîl descends again, this time to reveal Q. 21: 22 («*If there were therein gods besides Allah, then verily both (the heavens and the earth) had been disordered. Glorified be Allah, the Lord of the Throne, from all that they ascribe (unto Him).*» Jibrîl explains that these verses were revealed to comfort Fâtima. Cf. SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 372.

¹²⁰ Lammens, H. "Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad": 266.

¹²¹ HSH. vol. II: 238-239; S^CD. vol. X, *Dbikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 28; BLD². n. 83: 26-27, n. 99: 31.

¹²² S^CD. vol. X, *Dbikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 23.

nothing which can avail you against God! You may ask me what you want of my worldly belongings.”¹²³

Of a certainty, there were four children born to ‘Alī and Fâtima: al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Zaynab and Umm Kulthûm.¹²⁴ As to a fifth child, the boy named al-Muhassin, there is some uncertainty, many of the Sunnî transmitters omitting any mention of him, or saying that he was born, but died in childhood: the Shī‘a remain adamant that Fâtima miscarried as a result of physical violence perpetrated against her after Muhammad’s death, (leading one to ponder their certainty that the child was a male).¹²⁵

According to the Sunnî Traditions, there appear to have been some disputes within the marriage: and so claim Lammens and Veccia Vaglieri, although neither offers any clear sources, and the minimal references in the books of Tradition hardly permit us to arrive at their conclusion that the marriage was miserable. Certainly, Ibn Sa‘d records an incident in which “there were words” between ‘Alī and Fâtima, causing Muhammad to intervene and make peace (by lying down between them and holding their hands

¹²³ MSL. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 89, n. 350: 192. Cf. also HNB. vol. III, *Musnad Abî Hurayra*, n. 8609: 262, vol. IX, *Musnad ‘Ā’isha*, n. 25098: 462, n. 25592: 555. This Tradition appears in a number of variant forms: one of them reads: “Fâtima daughter of Muhammad, save yourself from the Fire, for I have no power (to protect you) from God in anything except this, that I would sustain relationship with you.” Cf. HNB. vol. III, *Musnad Abî Hurayra*, n. 8409: 230, n. 8735: 284; MSL. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 89, n. 348: 192.

¹²⁴ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 27; NSA²: 5; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ’ wa-kunâ-hunna*, n. 4057: 1894. These authors mention only four children, omitting al-Muhassin. Cf. also Ibn Mâlik. *al-Mawatta’*. Bk. 26 (*Kitâb al-‘aḳīqa*), bb. 1, nn. 2-3: 501 for the record of Fâtima shaving the hair of her four newborn children and giving in charity the weight in silver.

¹²⁵ Among the Sunnî, al-Muhassin is mentioned by: HNB. vol. I, *Musnad ‘Alī b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 769: 211-212, n. 953: 250-251, where his birth is recorded, n. 1370: 335 where it is omitted; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aḡwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 865: 402, 404; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 73: 128; JWZ². vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 2; RHB.: 55.

until reconciliation was achieved).¹²⁶ Lammens draws on another event recorded by Ibn Saʿd:

“‘Alī was severe with Fâtima, and she said: I will complain to the Messenger of God about you! So she set out, and ‘Alī set out after her. He (Muhammad) stood listening to their words, and she complained to the Messenger of God about the harshness (*ghilaz*) of ‘Alī and his severity (*shidda*) against her. Then he said: My daughter, listen closely and be reasonable. There is no authority for a woman who does not carry out the desire (*hawâ*) of her husband, and he remains taciturn. ‘Alī said: I refrained from what I was doing and I said: I will never again do something that you dislike.”¹²⁷

The Arabic *hawâ* could be translated as ‘love’, ‘attachment’, ‘the inclination of the soul or mind to a thing’, ‘the object of love’, ‘desirous love’ or even ‘love and desire which is not praiseworthy’. It may, but does not necessarily, carry a sexual connotation.¹²⁸ As it stands, this text is puzzling and imprecise: Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalânî reports the words of Muhammad slightly differently, in what may be a corrupted version of the Tradition: “There is no woman whose husband does not come to her and he remains silent.”¹²⁹

Lammens seizes upon the words ‘severity’ and ‘harshness’ and draws the conclusion that ‘Alī was ‘violent’ towards his wife,¹³⁰ further proving the disastrous nature of the marriage. Caetani examines the same text and decides that it refers to an occasion of violent scenes on the part of ‘Alī against his wife: on this alone, he concludes that the marriage was an unhappy one.¹³¹ But an exami-

¹²⁶ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 26-27.

¹²⁷ Ibid.: 26.

¹²⁸ Cf. Lane, E.W. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. VIII: 3046-3047.

¹²⁹ SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ*, n. 830: 368.

¹³⁰ Lammens H. “Fatîma and the Daughters of Muhammad”, nt. 275: 302.

¹³¹ “Abbiamo anche notizia che il matrimonio di Fâtimah non fosse felice, e che fra ‘Alī e lei avvenissero una volta scene violente, nelle quali

nation of the text itself necessarily leads us to very different conclusions: it remains puzzling that Lammens and Caetani should be so readily satisfied with a single incident as sufficient proof of their claims. It must be noted at once that this text is found only in Ibn Sa'd and al-'Asqalânî (so that Lammens' contention that "the volumes of the Hadith mention violent scenes between the couple"¹³² is untenable). We must question the nature of 'Alî's 'violence': the Arabic *shidda* has a whole range of meanings, including 'hardness', 'vehemence', 'severity', 'violence', 'strictness', 'intensity' and 'stress'.¹³³ The term *ghilaṣ* also carries a variety of possible interpretations, among them 'churlish', 'uncompliant', 'surly', 'ill-natured', 'rude', 'uncivil' and 'unkind'.¹³⁴

It is almost certainly not physical violence that is meant here, for Muhammad, who forbade 'Alî a second marriage for fear of upsetting his daughter, and who insisted that whatever angered Fâtima angered him (and that "O Fâtima, verily God is angry when you are angry")¹³⁵ would hardly have permitted such a situation. Furthermore, physical violence on the part of 'Alî towards his wife would almost certainly have found an echo in the other Sunnî accounts of their marriage. The insinuation of this passage is that 'Alî is constantly severe with his wife (*kâna fî 'Alî 'alâ Fâtima shidda*): were it violence, we would expect to find this state of affairs reported by other, especially earlier sources, just as we would expect Muhammad to have reacted. But it is not so: while other texts suggest momentary problems and marital disputes, this situation is reported upon only by Ibn Sa'd and al-'Asqalânî, leading us to ponder its reliability.

'Alî maltrattò la moglie: Fâtimah corse per protezione presso il padre, e Maometto ristabilì pace fra i coniugi." Cf. Caetani, L. *Annali dell'Islam*, vol. II, Tome I, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972: 690.

¹³² Lammens H. "Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad": 248.

¹³³ Cf. Lane E. W. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. IV: 1517-1519.

¹³⁴ Ibid. vol. VI: 2282-2283.

¹³⁵ HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4793: 181; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 2: 90; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*: 522; DHB². vol. II, n. 4560: 492; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*, n. 830: 366-367; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, n. 4434: 441; MTQ. vol. V: 97.

Nor can we easily believe that 'Alî's 'violence' consisted of perpetual verbal abuse, since the picture of 'Alî that emerges from the Sunnî records is one of a reticent and brooding character: this is the 'Alî who says nothing when his attempts at taking other wives are thwarted (by Fâtima) and forbidden (by Muhammad), the 'Alî who leaves the house and sleeps in the mosque when he and Fâtima disagree, the 'Alî who meekly accepts her rejection of the house he builds her, the 'Alî who, after her death, pays to Abû Bakr the allegiance he had steadily refused while Fâtima was alive, the 'Alî who lives under the shadow of Muhammad, not merely his cousin, but his Prophet and father-figure. Already, we have an indication of the nature of the *shidda* and *ghilaz* of which he stands accused, an indication that is confirmed by Muhammad's words in the text (and in 'Alî's subsequent reaction). Muhammad's words are addressed primarily to Fâtima, but contain an oblique rebuke of 'Alî's conduct, which is unquestionably his failure to communicate in a civil manner with his wife, resulting in a churlish and sullen atmosphere in the house. Muhammad admonishes a husband who remains silent when his wife fails to please him, but concomitantly points out to Fâtima that all husbands grumble about the ministrations of their wives, and that she ought not to expect anything different, so that the reprimand is directed against both parties. As soon as Muhammad has spoken, 'Alî apologizes, promising never more to do what displeases Fâtima. If, following Lammens, we accept this Tradition as authentic (although we would be hard-pressed to do so), we have no reason to disbelieve 'Alî's change of heart.

There are other incidents extant: the most serious dispute is allegedly a suggestion made to 'Alî, and to which he was not un-receptive, that he marry a woman of the Banû Hishâm b. al-Mughîra of the Quraysh.¹³⁶ Muhammad rejected the plan. At the same time, it appears that 'Alî was contemplating taking as a second wife the daughter of Abû Jahl, one of Muhammad's fiercest opponents: according to al-Bukhârî and some others, he demanded her hand, causing Muhammad to worry that Fâtima would be subjected

¹³⁶ MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, n. 93: 1902, n. 94: 1904; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. Muhammad*, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*, n. 3866: 386; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 865: 403-404.

to trials in her religion (because of jealousy).¹³⁷ Having received complaints from Fâtima, Muhammad protested from the pulpit that the daughter of God's Prophet and the daughter of God's enemy could not live under the same roof, intimating that 'Alî would have to divorce Fâtima before going ahead with a second marriage.¹³⁸ Many transmitters make one or both of these marital disputes the context for Muhammad's famous saying, recorded in these or similar words: "Fâtima is part of me. Whatever troubles her troubles me, and whatever injures her injures me."¹³⁹

¹³⁷ BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 53 (*Kitâb fard al-khums*), ch. 5, n. 342: 219-220, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-ashâb*), ch. 17, n. 75: 56-57; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, n. 95: 1903; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. Muhammad*, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*, n. 3868: 387.

¹³⁸ MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, n. 96: 1903-1904.

¹³⁹ In the context of the marriage regarding a woman of the Banû Hishâm b. al-Mughîra of the Quraysh: MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10, n. 93: 1902; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima bt. Muhammad*, n. 3866: 386; BLD¹. vol. I, *Aẓwâj rasûl Allâh*, n. 865: 402-403; NSA².: 80-81; QID. vol. VII, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, n. 93: 472; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 6: 91-92; JWZ². vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 4; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*: 521; MTQ. vol. V: 96. In the context of the marriage regarding the daughter of Abû Jahl: HNB. vol. VI, *Hadîth al-Masûr b. Makbrama al-Zubrí*, n. 18933: 492, n. 18935: 492-493, vol. V, *Hadîth 'Abd Allâh b. Zubayr b. al-'Anwâm*, n. 16123: 453; BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 53 (*Kitâb fard al-khums*), ch. 5, n. 342: 219-220, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-ashâb*), ch. 17, n. 75: 56-57; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10, nn. 95, 96: 1903-1904; ADD. vol. I, bk. 12 (*Kitâb al-nikâh*), bb. 12: 478; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima bt. Muhammad*, n. 3868: 386-387; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sahâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, nn. 4813, 4814, 4815: 187-188; QID. vol. VII, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, nn. 95, 96: 472-474; RAZ. vol. XVI, Part 32, *Sûrat al-kâfirîn*: 141; 4; KTR¹. vol. VI: 333; MTQ. vol. V: 97-98. The Shî'a Ibn al-Hadîd takes a Sunnî view: HDI. vol. IV: 6. Outside of the marriage context: HNB. vol. VI, *Hadîth al-Masûr b. Makbrama al-Zubrí*, n. 18929: 486-487, n. 18952: 501-502; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-ashâb*), ch. 13, n. 61: 50, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-ashâb*), ch. 29, n. 111: 75; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10, n. 94: 1903; NSA².: 81-82; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sahâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4797: 182,

The Shī'a record the Tradition, but deny the context of 'Alī attempting a second marriage while Fâtima was still alive.¹⁴⁰ The designation of 'Alī as *Abū Turāb* ('the father of dust')¹⁴¹ is also given

n. 4811: 186-187; ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 40-41; QID. vol. VII, bk. 44 (*Kitāb fadā'il al-sabāba*), bb. 10 *Fadā'il Fâtima bt. al-nabī*, n. 94: 472; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadā'il Fâtima al-Zabrā' bt. rasūl Allāh*, n. 29: 103, n. 49: 112; RAZ. vol. XIV, Part 27, *Sūrat al-shūrā*: 166, *Sūrat al-ẓukhruf*: 200, vol. XV, Part 30, *Sūrat al-ma'ārij*: 126; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fā'*, n. 830: 366; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitāb al-nisā'*, n. 4434: 441; KTR². vol. V, *Sūrat al-mu'minūn*: 40; MTQ. vol. V: 96-97; ISM. vol. I, bb. 4: 368. Here, the Shī'a Ibn al-Hadīd is in line with Shī'a thought: HDI. vol. XIII: 35, vol. XVI: 278. Ibn al-Hadīd is somewhat problematic: while some claim that he was a Shī'a, it is not utterly certain that he was. In a passage that concentrates on his brother, he is mentioned ambiguously by Modarressi, who notes in passing that he transmitted from his uncle Abū Muhammad Murāzīm b. Hakīm al-Madā'inī, who in turn transmitted from the fifth and sixth Imāms, but does not name the nephew's work (Modarressi, H. *Tradition and Survival. A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shi'ite Literature*, vol. 1: 308, 319, 353). Brockelmann is equally imprecise. Some claim that he was a member of the Mu'tazila, but not a Shī'a. In spite of a dearth of evidence, I have chosen to retain him among the Shī'a, even though on a number of occasions, Ibn al-Hadīd carries Traditions that are out of line with the Shī'a stance, thus putting himself out of the Shī'a ambit. Examples of these, listed later in this study, are the alleged attempt at a second marriage by 'Alī during Fâtima's lifetime, and the contention that 'Alī's popularity began to wane after Fâtima's death. Nevertheless, at times I have quoted him among the Sunnī, simply because in that instance his opinion concurs with theirs.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. for e.g.: QHL.: 830, 868; RTB¹. bb. *Khabar al-wafāt wa-l-dafn*: 45; RTB².: 70, 177; KFI. bb. *Fadl al-ghayra*: 95; RQM.: 23; SDQ¹. n. 3: 102, n. 18: 486; SDQ⁸. vol. I, n. 2: 185, 187; MFD⁵. n. 2: 259; FNR. vol. I: 149; RWD².: 14; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manāqib Fâtima al-Zabrā'*: 378; BTQ. nn. 757, 758: 384, n. 767: 385, n. 769: 388; IRB. vol. I: 363, 466; HLL¹.: 351, 362; AHS. vol. IV, n. 131: 93; AML. vol. I: 170, vol. II: 118, 282, 289, vol. III: 12; SHT.: 140, 147; HRR¹. vol. XX, bb. 24, n. 25054: 67, vol. XX, bb. 129, n. 25510: 232; MJL. vol. XXI, bb. 32: 279, vol. XXIII, bb. 7, n. 97: 143, bb. 13: 234, vol. XXVII, bb. 1: 62; NTR. vol. XIV, bb. 61, n. 16450: 182; DAY. vol. II: 231, 430.

¹⁴¹ BUK¹. vol. I, bk. 8 (*Kitāb al-salāt*), ch. 58, n. 432: 288, vol. VIII, bk. 72 (*Kitāb al-adab*), ch. 113, n. 223: 143, vol. VIII, bk. 74 (*Kitāb al-isti'dhān*), ch. 40, n. 297: 197-198, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitāb fadā'il al-ashāb*), ch. 10, n. 53: 44-45 (outside of the context of a marriage dispute); MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitāb fadā'il al-sabāba*), bb. 4 *Fadā'il 'Alī b. Abī Tālib*, n. 38: 1874-1875 (in

by some transmitters within the context of a marital dispute, with ‘Alî, rather than speaking angrily to his wife, leaving the house and sleeping in the mosque. This apparent desire to circumvent conflict brings into question his purportedly harsh treatment of his wife. It is also a curious reaction on the part of ‘Alî, who declares about women:

“O ye peoples! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence. As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period. As regards deficiency in their intelligence it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man. As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share of inheritance being half of men. So beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good. Do not obey them even in good things so that they may not attract you to evil.”¹⁴²

In the light of these words, we must conclude that certain actions on the part of ‘Alî – his leaving the house after a quarrel with Fâtima (either through incontrollable anger or extraordinary submissiveness and the desire not to speak angrily with her), his acceptance of the thwarting of his alleged marriage plans through her complaints to her father, his powerlessness to marry a second wife while Fâtima was still alive, his apparently meek acquiescence to her rejection of the house he built, and, as carefully noted by a number of Sunnî scholars, his capitulation in paying allegiance to

the context of a marriage dispute); NSA²: 24 (outside of the context of a marriage dispute); YTB². vol. VII, nn. 1272-1273: 16-17: he offers two accounts, neither of which is in the context of a marriage dispute, but which occur before the marriage; QID. vol. VII, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ’il al-sahâba*), bb. 4 *Min fadâ’il ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 38: 1874-1875; AKR. vol. 42: 17-19 (in the context of a marriage dispute); SBB.: 144. (There is no mention in Ibn al-Hadîd’s account of a marriage dispute, even in a footnote which mentions Fâtima – cf. HDI. vol. I: 2).

¹⁴² Reza, A, trans. *Peak of Eloquence*. 204.

Abû Bakr only after Fâtima's death as he begins to notice, subsequent to her death, a decline in peoples' respect for him¹⁴³ – all of this intimates that he did not treat his wife as he treated other woman. The picture that emerges from the Sunnî corpus of Tradition is not of a Fâtima palely loitering in the shadow of her husband's constant severity, but rather of an 'Alî who consistently backs down before the strong will of his wife.

It is Lammens' contention that Fâtima was a source of irritation to her father and her husband.¹⁴⁴ An examination of the books of Tradition certainly reveals some incidents, besides the three marriage disputes already mentioned. On one occasion, Muhammad meets Fâtima out walking, and in response to his query about what has brought her from her house, she replies that she has come to give comfort to a grieving family. Muhammad then interrogates her about whether she had accompanied the family to the graveyard, something he had apparently forbidden to women. She had not. But he speaks some harsh words to her: and while Abû Dâwûd does not record them, al-Nasâ'î does. She is told that had she gone to the graveyard, she would not have seen Paradise until the grandfather of her father had seen it, and since he would never enter Paradise, nor would she.¹⁴⁵ This is an inexplicable incident, considering Fâtima's regular visits to the grave of her uncle Hamza, killed at Uhud¹⁴⁶ (on one occasion, Muhammad sits next to his weeping daughter at the grave of Ruqayya, and wipes away her tears with his robe).¹⁴⁷ One author claims that Muhammad had

¹⁴³ BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 37, n. 545: 381-384; MSL. vol. III, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-jihâd*), bb. 16, n. 52: 1380-1381; YTB². vol. IX, nn. 1825, 1826: 196-197; BRR. vol. III, n. 1633: 973; HDI, vol. II: 22, vol. VI: 11, 46; KTR¹. vol. V: 249, 286.

¹⁴⁴ Lammens characterizes Muhammad as "bored and worn out" by Fâtima's incessant complaining, suggesting that Muhammad rejected her and was indifferent to her. Cf. Lammens, H. "Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad": 228, 245.

¹⁴⁵ HNB. vol. II, *Musnad 'Abd Allâh b. 'Amr b. al-'Âs*, n. 6585: 573, n. 7104: 690; ADD. vol. II, bk. XX (*Kitâb al-janá'iz*), bb. 22: 171; NSA¹. vol. IV, bk. 21 (*Kitâb al-janá'iz*): 26-27.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Howard, I.K.A., trans. *The Revolution of al-Husayn. Its Impact on the Consciousness of Muslim Society*: 27.

¹⁴⁷ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Abd Allâh b. al-'Abbâs b. 'Abd al-Muttalib*, n. 3103: 717-718.

given her special dispensation for graveyard visits, but he offers no sources for this claim.¹⁴⁸

On another occasion, Muhammad came to Fâtima just as she was removing from her neck a gold chain given her by ‘Alî. “Does it please you,” asks Muhammad, “that the people are saying that Fâtima, the daughter of Muhammad, has a chain of fire in her hand?” Fâtima disposes of the chain and purchases the freedom of a slave.¹⁴⁹ In a similar narrative, Muhammad arrived at Fâtima’s house to find that she had hung a colorful curtain over the door. He was annoyed, and refused to enter, reducing his daughter to puzzled tears until her husband explained the problem and she removed the curtain.¹⁵⁰ ‘Alî was no less irritated on the occasion of the Pilgrimage one year to discover that his wife had removed her pilgrim’s robes (*ihram*) and had put on colorful clothing and perfume. He complained to Muhammad, only to discover that he himself had ordered it.¹⁵¹

A final incident concerns both ‘Alî and Fâtima: Muhammad came to their house, exhorting them to rise from sleep and to pray the *tabajjud* – the optional prayers offered from the middle to the last part of the night. The response from ‘Alî – that their lives were in the hands of God and that if He wanted them to pray He

¹⁴⁸ Nevill, A, trans. *Shi’ite Islam*: 25.

¹⁴⁹ HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4788: 178-179. This is an inexplicable incident, coming from the same Muhammad who mused that, had Usâma, son of Zayd b. Hâritha been a girl, he would have bedecked and attired her until she was provided for (the sense being that he would have covered her in jewels and fine clothing until a husband was found: cf. HNB. vol. X, *Musnad ‘Â’isha*, n. 25919: 49-50); and who gave to his granddaughter Umâma, daughter of Zaynab and Usâma b. Zayd, a magnificent necklace of onyx (HNB. vol. IX, *Musnad ‘Â’isha*, n. 24758: 399, vol. X, *Musnad ‘Â’isha*, n. 26309: 121-122).

¹⁵⁰ HNB. vol. II, *Musnad ‘Abd Allâh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khattâb*, n. 4727: 244-245, vol. VIII, *Hadîth Abî ‘Abd al-Rahmân al-Safîna*, n. 21981: 214, vol. VIII, *Hadîth Thawbân*, n. 22426: 320; BUK¹. vol. III, bk. 47 (*Kitâb al-hibba*), ch. 27, n. 783: 474; ADD. vol. II, bk. 26 (*Kitâb al-af’ima*), bb. 8, n. 309, bk. 31 (*Kitâb al-libâs*), bb. 32: 283, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-tarajjul*), bb. 21: 404-405.

¹⁵¹ HNB. vol. V, *Musnad Jâbir b. ‘Abd Allâh*, n. 14447: 62-64; ADD. vol. I, bk. 11 (*Kitâb manâsik wa-l-hajj*), bb. 24: 417, bb. 56: 441; YTB². vol. IX, n. 1752: 110.

Himself would rouse them – is also put into Fâtima's mouth by Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Kathîr: but whoever spoke it, it caused Muhammad no little distress, and he left the scene grumbling about human stubbornness.¹⁵²

But these are, in the wider scheme, trivial incidents, and hardly serve as a credible foundation for the claims of Lammens. Of no less significance is Muhammad's statement, already seen, that whatever angers Fâtima angers him, as well as a Tradition, on the authority of 'Â'isha and carried by a number of Sunnî transmitters, in which Muhammad's tender care for Fâtima is described:

"We were told...on the authority of the Mother of the believers 'Â'isha, may God be pleased with her, that she said: I never saw anyone more similar to the Messenger of God, God bless and save him and his family, in respect of talk and speech, than Fâtima. Whenever she came to visit him, he welcomed her, and stood and took her by her hand, kissed her and made her sit where he was sitting."¹⁵³

Considering the prominence of 'Â'isha's name in the chain of transmitters, this is a startlingly positive description of Fâtima. The two women had no love for each other, and their internecine strife continued after Muhammad's death. Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Kathîr record an incident in which 'Alî sent Fâtima to her father to complain about 'Â'isha's alleged slander and 'scoring hits' against them:

¹⁵² HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 571: 167, n. 575: 168, n. 715: 200, n. 900: 239; BUK¹. vol. II, bk. 21 (*Kitâb al-tabajjud*), ch. 4, n. 227: 127, vol. IX, bk. 93 (*Kitâb al-tamhîd*), ch. 31, n. 557: 418; KTR². vol. IV, *Sûrat al-kaḥf*: 400. Ibn Kathîr places the last part of Q. 18: 54 («...but man is more than anything contentious») on the lips of Muhammad as his complaint.

¹⁵³ SCD. vol. X, *Dhîkr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 27; BUK².: 137; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sabâba*), bb. 10, n. 97: 1904-1905; ADD. vol. II, bk. 40 (*Kitâb al-adab*), bb. 144: 645; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4795: 181; ISH. vol. II, bb. 133 (*Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*): 42; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ*, n. 4057: 1896; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 7: 93; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*: 522; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*, n. 830: 367; SQL³. vol. VIII, bb. 84, n. 4434: 171.

Muhammad's reply to his daughter – “She is the beloved of your father and of the Lord of the *Ka'ba*” – is all the answer she gets.¹⁵⁴ On this occasion, 'Alī takes the part of Fâtima to the point of rebuking Muhammad: “Wasn't it enough for you,” he asks “that 'Â'isha should insult us? Did you have then to tell Fâtima that 'Â'isha is ‘the beloved of your father and of the Lord of the *Ka'ba*’?”¹⁵⁵

'Â'isha was quick to deny that Muhammad had designated 'Alī as his successor,¹⁵⁶ and found herself banned from Fâtima's deathbed (or, claim others, simply refused to be present).¹⁵⁷ Muhammad's wives, led by Umm Salama (who herself had tried and failed) used Fâtima as a spokeswoman to express their mutual resentment against his apparent preference for 'Â'isha. Fâtima rarely succeeded in these demands upon her father: his reply, “Do you not love those whom I love” brought this particular mission to an end and she refused to try a second time.¹⁵⁸ One Shī'a author, developing the theme that the Sunnī authorities deliberately downplay Fâtima in order to highlight 'Â'isha, and writing of 'Â'isha's malice towards 'Alī,¹⁵⁹ notes:

“One cause for this hatred and malice was the presence of Hadrat Fâtimah (p.b.u.h.) whose wholesome dignity and esteem pricked her heart like a thorn. Her jealousy towards the other wives (of the Prophet) did not allow her to let the Prophet love the daughter of his other wife to such a degree that he should stand on her ap-

¹⁵⁴ HNB. vol. IX, *Musnad 'Â'isha*, n. 25040: 451-452; KTR². vol. VI, *Sûrat al-shûrâ*: 210.

¹⁵⁵ HNB. vol. IX, *Musnad 'Â'isha*, n. 25040: 451-452.

¹⁵⁶ BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 81, n. 736: 525.

¹⁵⁷ Once again, the ostensibly Shī'a Ibn al-Hadîd takes a Sunnī view of this matter. Cf. HDI. vol. IX: 198.

¹⁵⁸ HNB. vol. IX, *Musnad 'Â'isha*, n. 24629: 375, n. 25229: 488-489; BUK¹. vol. III, bk. 47 (*Kitâb al-hibba*), ch. 8, n. 775: 454-456; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sabâba*), bb. 13, n. 83: 1891-1892; ADD. vol. II, bk. 40 (*Kitâb al-adab*), bb. 41: 572-573; BLD¹. vol. I, n. 873: 415.

¹⁵⁹ Abbott maintains that 'Â'isha's hostility towards 'Alī had its genesis in his refusal to take her part in the so-called ‘incident of the necklace’, when rumors were spread about her fidelity to Muhammad. Cf. Abbott, N. *Aishah the Beloved of Mohammed*: 37-38.

proach, seat her in his own place, declare her most honourable of all the women of the world and bear such love towards her children as to call them his own sons...in short, all these things created the passion of hatred in her heart, as a result of which she off and on complained to the Prophet against Hadrat Fâtimah but could not succeed in diverting the Prophet's attention from her."¹⁶⁰

This attitude is more subtly expressed in another Tradition carried, with diverse wording, by some Sunnî transmitters:

“On the authority of ‘Â’isha (who said): Messenger of God, why is it that whenever Fâtima comes, you kiss her as far as putting the whole of your tongue into her mouth, as if you wanted to lick her like honey?”¹⁶¹

This Tradition continues with a description of the mystical fruit eaten by Muhammad in paradise, and is thus rejected by al-‘Asqalânî and al-Haythamî, not on the grounds of the theology expressed, but on the basis of the impossibility of Fâtima having been born after the night journey.

“The most beloved of my family to me is Fâtima” declares Muhammad in a Tradition carried by a number of the Sunnî transmitters¹⁶² and, also by the Sunnî, “The most loved of women to the

¹⁶⁰ Reza, A, trans. *Peak of Eloquence*: 318.

¹⁶¹ Cf. BGD. vol. V, n. 2481: 87; SQL². vol. V, n. 541: 160; HAY. vol. IX, *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 202; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhikr manâqib ‘Âlî b. Abî Tâlib*: 42.

¹⁶² Cf. for e.g. HNB. vol. VIII, *Hadîth Usâma b. Zayd*, n. 21836: 181-182; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *Manâqib Usâma b. Zayd*, n. 3821: 359 and bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima bt. Muhammad*, n. 3867: 386; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sahâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, nn. 4798, 4799: 182-183, n. 4808: 186; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4057: 1897; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zahrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, nn. 12, 13: 95; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-jâ’*: 520, 552.

Prophet of God is Fâtima and the most loved of men is ‘Alî.’¹⁶³ It is also related that when Muhammad travelled, the last person he greeted upon leaving and first he greeted upon arriving back was Fâtima.¹⁶⁴

Much lamentation and weeping marks the life of Fâtima during the final illness and death of her father¹⁶⁵ and her own last months. “Among the women believers,” Jibrîl tells her when her father dies, “there is no greater grief than yours”,¹⁶⁶ while Ibn Kathîr, among others, reports that she never once laughed after her father’s death.¹⁶⁷ Even the act of burying her father’s body distresses her, with her words, as reported by a number of Sunnî transmitters taking on a note of hysteria: “Anas, does it please you to throw earth over God’s Messenger?”¹⁶⁸ But while this grief is disparaged as weakness by Lammens, it is a noble characteristic within the context of Shî’a spirituality. It is during this time that we

¹⁶³ TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima bt. Muhammad*, n. 3867: 386, n. 3873: 390; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sahâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4799: 183, n. 4808: 186; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 12: 95, n. 17: 96-97, n. 18: 97. Cf. also ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*: 522. Despite this Tradition, the Sunnî transmitters also carry a Tradition in which the names ‘Fâtima’ and ‘Alî’ (or ‘her husband’) are replaced with ‘Â’isha’ and ‘her father’.

¹⁶⁴ HNB. vol. VIII, *Hadîth Thawbân*, n. 22426: 320; ADD. vol. II, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-tarajjul*), bb. 21: 404; HNA. vol. I, bk. 16 (*Kitâb al-munâsik*), n. 1849: 669, vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sahâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4802: 184 (al-Dhahabî claims that al-Nîsâbûrî’s chain of transmission is weak); RHB.: 37.

¹⁶⁵ SCD. vol. II, bb. *Dbîkr al-huẓn ‘alâ rasûl Allâh*: 720; HNB. vol. IV, *Musnad Anas b. Mâlik*, n. 13030: 392; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâẓ*), n. 739: 526-527; MJA. vol. I, bk. 6 (*Kitâb al-janâ’iz*), bb. 65, n. 1630: 522; NSA¹. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-janâ’iz*, bb. *Fî al-bukâ’ ‘alâ al-mayyit*: 12-13; HNA. vol. I, bk. 13 (*Kitâb al-janâ’iz*), n. 1409: 532-533, vol. III, bk. 30 (*Kitâb al-maghâẓ*), n. 4457: 65; BGD. vol. VI, n. 3292: 261-262.

¹⁶⁶ SQL³. vol. VIII, bk. 6 (*Kitâb al-maghâẓ*), bb. 84, n. 4434: 171.

¹⁶⁷ ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 42-43; KTR¹. vol. VI: 333.

¹⁶⁸ SCD. vol. II, bb. *Dbîkr al-huẓn ‘alâ rasûl Allâh*: 720; HNB. vol. IV, *Musnad Anas b. Mâlik*, n. 13115: 406-407; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâẓ*), n. 739: 526-527; MJA. vol. I, bk. 6 (*Kitâb al-janâ’iz*), bb. 65, n. 1630: 522; HNA. vol. I, bk. 13 (*Kitâb al-janâ’iz*), n. 1409: 532-533; BGD. vol. VI, n. 3292: 261-262.

are offered another Tradition directly relating to Fâtima, containing a twofold prediction and transmitted in many forms by the Sunnî:

“On the authority of ‘Â’isha (who said): I met Fâtima, peace be upon her, and her gait was like the gait of the Messenger of God, God bless and save him. He said: Welcome, my daughter! Then he made her sit on his left side, and he whispered something to her and she wept. I said: The Messenger of God, God bless and save him, favors you with his saying, and you weep? Then he whispered something to her and she laughed. I said: I never, as today, saw happiness so close to sadness. I asked her about what he had said, and she replied: I would never disclose the secret of the Messenger of God, God bless and save him. When he died, God bless and save him, I asked, and she said: He whispered to me and said that every year Jibrîl used to review the Qur’ân with me once, but this year he has compared it with me twice. I cannot see it except that the time of my death is present, and you will be the first of my family to follow me. So I wept because of that. Then he said: Does it not please you to be the mistress of the women of this community or the mistress of the women of the believers? She said: So I laughed because of that.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 27; HNB. vol. X, *Abâdîth Fâtima*, n. 26475: 157-158; BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 56 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), ch. 24, n. 819: 526-527, vol. VI, bk. 61 (*Kitâb fadâ’il al-qur’ân*), ch. 7, (n.n.): 485, vol. VIII, bk. 74 (*Kitâb al-isti’dhân*), ch. 43, n. 301: 201-202; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ’il al-sabâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ’il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, n. 98, 99 pp. 1904-1906; NSA².: 77-80; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4804: 184; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhikr manâqib ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 43; ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 39-40 recounts the whole Tradition, but substitutes ‘of paradise’ with ‘of the worlds’; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ’ wa-kunâ-hunna*, bb. *al-Fâ’*, n. 4057: 1894-1895; QID. vol. VII, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ’il al-sabâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ’il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, nn. 98, 99: 475; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 7: 92-93, and, outside the context of this Tradition, n. 19: 97-98, n. 77: 131;

The first part of the prediction, in which Fâtima is told that she will be the first to follow her father, is not always related in the context of this Tradition.¹⁷⁰ Both of these predictions have been under-

AKR. vol. 42: 134 (not in the usual context); JWZ². vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 4; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*: 522 recounts the whole Tradition, but substitutes 'of paradise' with 'of the worlds'; MTQ. vol. V: 98; SQL³. vol. VIII, bb. 84, n. 4434: 171. Among the Shî'a, cf. SDQ¹. n. 2: 595; MFD¹. vol. I: 181; FNR. vol. I: 150; TBR¹.: 133; RWD³. bb. 13, n. 433: 357; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ'*: 410; BTQ. n. 764: 386; IRB. vol. I: 453; MJL. vol. XXII, bb. 1, n. 19: 466, n. 20: 472, vol. XXXI: 214, vol. XXXV, bb. 5: 230, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 30: 67, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 48: 51, bb. 7, n. 12: 171. Cf. also JQM.: 112; DAY. vol. I: 33.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. SCD. vol. X, *Dhîkr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 27; HNB. vol. X, *Musnad 'Â'isha*, n. 26091: 82, n. 26476: 158, n. 26482: 159; DRM. vol. I, *al-Muqaddima*, bb. *Fî wafât al-nabî*, n. 77: 37; BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 56 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), ch. 24, n. 819: 526-527, vol. VI, bk. 61 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-qur'ân*), ch. 7, (n.n.): 485, vol. VIII, bk. 74 (*Kitâb al-isti'dhân*), ch. 43, n. 301: 201-202, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-ashâb*), ch. 13, n. 62: 50-51, vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 81, n. 718: 513; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, n. 97: 1904, n. 99: 1905-1906; NSA².: 79-80; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sahâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4786: 177-178 (Fâtima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn will be the first to enter paradise with Muhammad); ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 40; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ' wa-kunâ-hunna*, bb. *al-Fâ'*, n. 4057: 1894; QID. vol. VII, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, nn. 97, 99: 474-476; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zahrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 56: 120 (recorded outside of the usual context); JWZ². vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 4; KTR¹. vol. II, *Qissat 'Isâ b. Maryam*: 60, vol. VI: 332; MTQ. vol. V: 98; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhîkr manâqib 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 43. The Shî'a transmitters of this Tradition include: QHL.: 565; RTB¹.: 43; RTB².: 177, 199, 271; RQM.: 62, 124; SDQ¹. n. 2: 112, n. 18: 486, n. 2: 595; SDQ². vol. I, bb. 24, n. 10: 262; TFA². bb. 7, n. 18-316: 188, bb. 14, n. 40-892: 400; FNR. vol. I: 149-150; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ'*: 410; BTQ. n. 763: 385, n. 765: 386; TST². vol. I: 247; IRB. vol. I: 17, 453, 497, vol. II: 468; HLL¹.: 432; HLL². bb. 195: 487; MJL. vol. XXII, bb. 2, nn. 36-38: 532-536, vol. XXVII, bb. 2, n. 4: 31, n. 21: 52, vol. XXIX, bb. 11: 112, vol. XXXV, bb. 5: 230, vol. XXXVI, bb. 41, n. 85: 264, n. 110: 288, n. 146: 307, n. 184: 328, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 38: 68, 71, n. 52: 84, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 20: 20, n. 22: 25, n. 48: 51, bb. 7, n. 2: 156, n. 13: 172, n. 16: 180, n. 30: 201, n. 36: 207, bb. 8, n. 13: 227, vol. LI, bb. 1, n. 37: 78, vol. LXXVIII, bb. 7, n. 40: 282; NTR. vol. II, bb. 43, n. 1-2187: 358, n. 5-2191: 361, vol. X, bb. 33, n. 28-12007: 275.

scored and developed by the Shī'a transmitters: but they are transmitted in various forms by the Sunnî authorities, who are not in complete agreement over the wording or the theology. The first holds that Fâtima is the mistress of the women of this (i.e. Muhammad's) community and of the women of the believers.¹⁷¹ The second teaches that Fâtima is the mistress of the women of Muhammad's community, of the women believers and of the women of the worlds.¹⁷² The third posits that Fâtima is the mistress of the women of Muhammad's community and of the women of the worlds.¹⁷³ The fourth declares that Fâtima is the mistress of the

¹⁷¹ All of these are transmitted on the authority of 'Â'isha. HNB. vol. X, *Abâdîth Fâtima*, n. 26475: 157-158; BUK¹. vol. VIII, bk. 74 (*Kitâb al-isti'dhân*), ch. 43, n. 301: 201-202; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sabâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, n. 98, 99: 1904-1906; QID. vol. VII, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sabâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, nn. 98, 99: 475; JWZ². vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 4.

¹⁷² Al-Nisâbûrî (on the authority of 'Â'isha) and Ibn al-Athîr. Cf. HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4804: 184; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ*: 522.

¹⁷³ All of these are transmitted on the authority of 'Â'isha. S^cD. vol. X, *Dhîkr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 27; NSA²: 78-80; ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 39-40; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Fâ'*, n. 4057: 1894-1895; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*, n. 830: 367; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhîkr manâqib 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 43. The Shī'a transmitters of this Tradition ("Fâtima is the mistress of the women of the worlds") include: QHL: 780; RTB¹: 10, 47, 54; RTB²: 12, 16, 23-24, 69, 115, 155, 177, 197; KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *Mawlid al-Zabrâ' Fâtima*, n. 3: 458-459; NUM. bb. 4, n. 1: 57; QQM. n. 8: 174, n. 17: 230, n. 2: 309; RQM.: 36, 98; SDQ¹. n. 2: 25, n. 9: 26, n. 10: 57, n. 2: 112, n. 8: 125, n. 8: 178, n. 12: 298, n. 10: 467, n. 6: 473, n. 18: 486; SDQ². vol. I, n. 1: 256, n. 26: 260, n. 27: 305; SDQ³. vol. II: 572, vol. IV: 179, 420; SDQ⁴. vol. I: 1; SDQ⁵. vol. I, n. 67: 306, vol. II: 269; SDQ⁶. n. 9: 58, n. 1: 107, n. 1: 164; SDQ⁷. n. 84: 98; AYY. vol. I, bb. 3, n. 48: 173; MFD¹. vol. I: 5, 354, vol. III: 5; MFD²: 14, 37, 90; MFD³: 132; MFD⁴: 167; TFA¹. vol. III: 110, vol. VI, bb. 3: 10, bb. 11: 39, bb. 10: 41, bb. 18: 56; TFA². bb. 22, n. 1/1175: 568; TFA³: 210, 213; FNR. vol. I: 100, 102, 111, 125, 149, 254-255; TBR¹: 150, 154, 156, 203; TBR². vol. I: 134, 314; RWD¹. vol. II: 907; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 369-370; BTQ. n. 764: 386, n. 767: 387; TST¹. vol. I, n. 129: 91, n. 162: 110; 178, 218, 250, 258, 266, 268, 272, 275; TST³: 60, 296, 332, 335, 466, 565, 589, 591, 623-624, 712; TST⁴. bb. 72: 236, bb. 154: 414; TST⁵: 173, 286; IRB. vol. I: 80, 348, 360, 366, 440, 444, 452, 514, vol. II: 120; HLL¹: 254, 362; HLL²: 194-195, 456; KFM¹: 47, 476, 482, 491, 581, 739;

women of the people of Paradise.¹⁷⁴ The fifth teaches that Fâtima is the mistress of the women of the people of Paradise with the exception of (or ‘after’) Maryam the daughter of ‘Imrân.¹⁷⁵ The

KFM²: 34, 158, 194, 269, 278, 281, 287, 291, 356; ABD.: 200; NTR. vol. I, bb. 1, n. 17: 75, vol. II, bb. 22, n. 9/6897: 316, vol. X, bb. 6, n. 8/11830: 194, bb. 14, n. 3/11904: 210, bb. 23, n. 3/11905: 226, bb. 86, n. 16/12273: 412; JQM.: 8, 10, 85, 118, 169; DAY. vol. II: 221, 231, 295, 314, 323. Al-Majlisî imputes this title to her more than one-hundred-and-fifty times. Cf. for e.g. MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 13: 22, n. 20: 24, n. 25: 26, n. 41: 37, n. 46: 49, n. 63: 76, bb. 5, n. 22: 107, n. 32: 130, bb. 6, n. 2: 147, bb. 7, n. 13: 172, n. 21: 193.

¹⁷⁴ Ibn Hanbal (on the authority of Hudhayfa), al-Bukhârî (on the authority of ‘Â’isha), al-Nîsâbûrî (on the authority of Hudhayfa), Ibn al-Athîr (on the authority of Umm Salama), Ibn Kathîr (on the authority of ‘Â’isha), al-‘Asqalânî (on the authority of ‘Â’isha), al-Haythamî (who notes that the chain of transmission is weak) and al-Muttaqî al-Hindî (on the authority of ‘Â’isha). HNB. vol. IX, *Hadîth Hudhayfa*, n. 23389: 91; BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 56 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), ch. 24, n. 819: 526-527, vol. VI, bk. 61 (*Kitâb fadâ’il al-qur’ân*), ch. 7, n.n.: 485, vol. VIII, bk. 74 (*Kitâb al-isti’dhân*), ch. 43, n. 301: 201-202, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ’il al-ashâb*), ch. 29, (n.n.): 74; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, nn. 4784, 4785: 177, n. 4796: 182; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*: 523; KTR¹. vol. VI: 332; SQL³. vol. VIII, bb. 84, n. 4434: 171; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 201; MTQ. vol. V: 98-99. The Shî’a transmitters of this Tradition include: QHL.: 565, 643, 675, 686, 790, 839, 907, 909; RTB²: 243, 253, 276; QQM. n. 2: 309; RQM.: 98, 124; SDQ¹. n. 7: 125; SDQ². vol. I, bb. 24, n. 10: 262; SDQ³. vol. II, n. 3210: 602; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 31: 553, n. 1: 572; SDQ⁵. vol. II, n. 1: 267; MFD¹. vol. I: 23, 352; MFD²: 183; MFD⁵. n. 4: 22; TFA¹. vol. VI, bb. 35: 86; TFA². bb. 3, n. 36/127: 84, bb. 9, n. 28/436: 248, bb. 13, n. 7/667: 232, bb. 20, n. 4/1168: 545, bb. 31, n. 7/1305: 633; FNR. vol. I, n. 128: 148; TBR¹: 159; TBR². vol. I: 278; TBR³: 93; RWD¹. vol. I: 209; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 370-371, bb. *Ma’âli umûri-himâ*: 445; BTQ. n. 756: 384, n. 768: 388; TST². vol. I, n. 129: 91, n. 348: 247, nn. 364, 366: 262-263, n. 705: 275; IRB. vol. I: 32, 255, 284, 495, vol. II: 10; HLL¹: 389, 391; HLL²: 111, 313, 352, 421; MJL. vol. XXI, bb. 32: 279, vol. XXII, bb. 1, n. 31: 404, bb. 2, n. 38: 536; JQM.: 118, 135; DAY. vol. II: 259, 428.

¹⁷⁵ Ibn Hanbal (on the authority of Abû Sa’îd Khudrî), al-Tirmidhî (on the authority of Umm Salama), al-Nasâ’î (on the authority of Umm Salama and Abû Sa’îd Khudrî), al-Tabarî (with a chain that does not include ‘Â’isha), al-Nîsâbûrî (on the authority of Abû Sa’îd Khudrî), ‘Abd al-Barr (on the authority of Abû Sa’îd Khudrî and on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbâs), Ibn Kathîr (on the authority of ‘Â’isha and on the authority of

sixth asserts that the mistresses (or 'the best') of the women of the people of Paradise are four (Maryam, Khadija, Fâtima, Âsiya).¹⁷⁶ The seventh claims that the mistresses (or 'the best') of the women of the people of the worlds are four (Maryam, Khadija, Fâtima, Âsiya).¹⁷⁷ The eighth holds that Maryam the daughter of 'Imrân is

Abû Sa'îd Khudrî), al-'Asqalânî (on the authority of Abû Sa'îd Khudrî and 'Â'isha), al-Suyûtî (on the authority of Ibn Abî Shayba), al-Haytamî (on the authority of Abû Sa'îd Khudrî) and al-Muttaqî al-Hindî (on the authority of 'Â'isha and Umm Salama). HNB. vol. IV, *Musnad Abî Sa'îd al-Khudrî*, n. 11756: 159; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima bt. Muhammad*, n. 3872: 389-390; NSA²: 77-78; YTB¹. vol. III, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, n. 7032: 398-399; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rîfat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4796: 182; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Fâ'*, n. 4057: 1823, 1894-1895; KTR¹. vol. II, *Qissat 'Îsâ b. Maryam*: 60; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*, n. 830: 366-367; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, n. 4434: 441; SYT. vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 42; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 201; MTQ. vol. V: 98-9.

¹⁷⁶ Ibn Hanbal (on the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs), al-Nisâbûrî (on the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs – but he mentions only Khadija and Fâtima), 'Abd al-Barr (on the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs), al-Khawârizmî (quoting Ibn Hanbal), al-Qurtubî (on the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs), Ibn Kathîr, al-'Asqalânî (on the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs), al-'Isâmî and al-Shablanjî (on the authority of 'Â'isha). HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Abd Allâh b. al-'Abbâs b. 'Abd al-Mutalib*, n. 2668: 627-628, n. 2903: 278, n. 2960: 689; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rîfat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4818: 189; Ibn BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Fâ'*, n. 4057: 1821-1822; KWZ. Part 1, ch. 2, *Fadâ'il Khadija*, n. 6: 48; QRT. vol. IV, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 83; KTR². vol. VII, *Sûrat al-tabrîm*: 25; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*, n. 830: 366; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, n. 4434: 441; ISM. vol. I, bb. 4: 368; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhikr manâqib 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 42-43.

¹⁷⁷ Ibn Hanbal, al-Tirmidhî, al-Nisâbûrî and Ibn Kathîr and (on the authority of Anas b. Mâlik), al-Tabarî (on the authority of Abû Sa'îd Khudrî), al-Tha'labî, 'Abd al-Barr, al-Qurtubî and al-'Asqalânî (on the authority of Abû Hurayra), al-Suyûtî (on the authority of Anas b. Mâlik and Ibn 'Abbâs, with the addition that Fâtima is the best of them) and al-'Isâmî. HNB. vol. IV, *Musnad Anas b. Mâlik*, n. 12394: 273; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *Fî fadl Khadija*, n. 3888: 396-397; YTB¹. vol. III, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, n. 7028: 395, n. 7030: 397; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rîfat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, nn. 4809, 4810: 186; TLB.: 372; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Fâ'*, n. 3311: 1821, n. 3311: 1822; QRT. vol. IV, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 83, vol. XVIII, *Sûrat al-tabrîm*: 204; KTR¹. vol. II, *Qissat 'Îsâ b. Maryam*: 59-60; KTR². vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*,

the mistress of the women of her world and Fâtima the daughter of Muhammad the mistress of the women of hers.¹⁷⁸ The ninth avows that only four women have reached perfection (Maryam, Khadîja, Fâtima, Âsiya).¹⁷⁹

According to the Shî'a, the words "Fâtima is the mistress of the women of the worlds" spoken by Muhammad are already predated, since Âdam has already seen them written in light on the leg of God's throne.¹⁸⁰

The inconsistency concerning the mistress or 'the best' of the women of Paradise (Fâtima, or Fâtima with the exception of Maryam, or Fâtima as one among four) is found throughout the Sunnî commentators. Al-Qurtubî suggests the excellence of Maryam over all other women, from Hawwâ' (Eve) until the last, because she, like the prophets, received revelation from God: but after her in excellence is Fâtima, then Khadîja, and then Âsiya. In support of this he quotes a Tradition, found also in 'Abd al-Barr and Ibn Kathîr, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs: "The mistress of the women of the worlds is Maryam, then Fâtima, then Khadîja, and then Âsiya."¹⁸¹ Ibn Kathîr, al-Tabarî, al-Tirmidhî, Ibn Hanbal, al-Bukhârî and Muslim carry a Tradition, on the authority of 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib or 'Abd Allâh b. Ja'far, that "Maryam is the best of her women and Khadîja is the best of hers" (suggesting a chronological

vv. 42-44: 36-37; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*, n. 830: 366; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, n. 4434: 441; SYT. vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 42; ISM. vol. I, bb. 4: 368.

¹⁷⁸ ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 40; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Fâ'*, n. 4057: 1894-1895; AKR. vol. 42: 134.

¹⁷⁹ Al-Tabarî (on the authority of Abû Mûsâ al-Ash'arî) and al-Shablanjî (on the authority of al-Bukhârî, Muslim and al-Tirmidhî). YTB¹. vol. III, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, n. 7031: 397-398; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhîkri manâqib 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 42-43.

¹⁸⁰ SDQ⁵. vol. I, bb. 28, n. 67: 306; SDQ⁶. n. 1: 124; MJL, vol. II, bb. 3, n. 9: 164-165; vol. XI, bb. 3, n. 9: 164-165; vol. XVI, bb. 11, n. 62: 362; vol. XXVI, bb. 6, n. 15: 273.

¹⁸¹ BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Fâ'*, n. 3311: 1822-1823, n. 4057: 1823; QRT. vol. IV, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 83; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, n. 4434: 441; KTR¹. vol. II, *Qissat 'Îsâ b. Maryam*: 61; SYT. vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 42.

interpretation).¹⁸² Fâtima's name is also missing from a Tradition carried by Ibn Kathîr and al-Qurtubî on the authority of Abû Mûsâ al-Ash'arî, stating that the only women to have reached perfection are Maryam, Khadîja, and Âsiya,¹⁸³ as well as one of numerous Traditions extolling 'Â'isha above all other women, which runs: "The superiority of 'Â'isha over the women is like the superiority of *tharîd* (a traditional dish) over other foods."¹⁸⁴

Some of these texts have been examined by Jane Dammen McAuliffe,¹⁸⁵ who uses as her starting point Q. 3: 42 and its exegesis by four Sunnî scholars (al-Zamakhsharî, al-Tabarî, al-Râzî and Muhammad Rashîd Ridâ) and three Shi'a scholars (Abû al-Futûh Râzî, Kâshânî and Tabâtâbâ'î).

Al-Tabarî prefers the chronological interpretation, positing that Maryam is chosen above the women of her time only, while quoting a Tradition which seems to suggest the opposite, in which Muhammad says: "Khadîja excels over the women of my community as Maryam excels over the women of the worlds" (whom al-Tabarî interprets as the women of paradise).¹⁸⁶ Al-Zamakhsharî¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 640: 182, n. 1211: 302; BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 55 (*Kitâb abâdât al-anbiyâ'*), ch. 40, n. 642: 427, vol. V, bk. 58 (*Kitâb manâqib al-ansâr*), ch. 21, n. 163: 103; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 12, n. 69: 1886; YTB¹. vol. III, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, nn. 7026-7027: 394; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *Fî fadl Khadîja*, n. 3887: 396; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Fâ'*, n. 3311: 1823; KTR². vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 36; SYT. vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 42; SHL.: 406.

¹⁸³ BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 55 (*Kitâb abâdât al-anbiyâ'*), ch. 28, n. 623: 411, ch. 41, n. 643: 428, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-ashâb*), ch. 30, nn. 113-114: 75-76, who omits Khadîja from his list; QRT. vol. IV, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 82-83; KTR². vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 36, *Sûrat al-tabrîm*: 25; SYT. vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 42 (who omits Khadîja).

¹⁸⁴ BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 55 (*Kitâb abâdât al-anbiyâ'*), ch. 28, n. 623: 411, ch. 41, n. 643: 428, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-ashâb*), ch. 30, nn. 113-114: 75-76; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Fadâ'il al-sahâba*), bb. 12, n. 70: 1886-1887, bb. 13, n. 89: 1895; QRT. vol. IV, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 82-83; KTR². vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 36-37, *Sûrat al-tabrîm*: 25; SYT. vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 42.

¹⁸⁵ McAuliffe, J.D. "Chosen of all women: Mary and Fâtima in Qur'anic Exegesis": 19-28.

¹⁸⁶ YTB¹. vol. III, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, n. 7033: 393, 399-340; Cf. also KWZ. Part 1, ch. 2, *Fadâ'il Khadîja*, n. 5: 48, n. 17: 56; SYT. vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 42.

and al-Râzî¹⁸⁸ reject the chronological approach, the latter quoting the Tradition in which Maryam, Āsiya, Khadīja and Fâtima are declared to be the most excellent of all women and positing that while this Tradition may suggest that these four are superior to all other women, the Qur'ân makes it clear that Maryam is superior to them. Al-Zamakhsharî holds that Maryam's preference over all other women depended upon the exalted mark of esteem (*karâma*) for which God selected her and in the birth of a child without male intervention, not given to any other woman. Rashîd Ridâ¹⁸⁹ offers no opinion in terms of the chronological interpretation, but quotes the same Tradition as al-Zamakhsharî, suggesting that all four are of equal (eternal) importance. These four are fairly representative of their own tradition: al-Qurtubî, for example, insists upon Maryam's superiority, based on the Qur'anic text and the corpus of Tradition, because she is a receiver of revelation.

The Shî'a, represented by al-Futûh Râzî,¹⁹⁰ diverge sharply from the various Sunnî exegetes, insisting upon the absolute pre-eminence of Fâtima over all women of all time because she is part of the body of Muhammad and what is part of Muhammad is greater than what is part of 'Imrân (the father of Maryam). He quotes some Traditions to support this view of her superiority, including the one in which Muhammad says that Fâtima is the mistress of the women of the worlds. Kâshânî,¹⁹¹ a 10TH/16TH century Shî'a exegete is, like al-Futûh Râzî, at pains to assert that Fâtima is absolutely superior to all women of all time. But like some other scholars (not just of the Shî'a), he opts for the position that Maryam was chosen above all other women of her time (thus a chronological choice), and this by her being given a child without a husband. In his turn, Muhammad Tabâtabâ'î¹⁹² rejects the chrono-

¹⁸⁷ ZMR. vol. I: 429.

¹⁸⁸ RAZ. vol. VIII, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 45-46.

¹⁸⁹ Muhammad Rashîd Ridâ (d. 1354/1935). *Tafsîr al-qur'ân al-bakîm al-shâbir bi-tafsîr al-manâr*, vol. III: 300.

¹⁹⁰ Jamâl al-Dîn Abû al-Futûh Râzî (c. 1087/1131). *Tafsîr rawd al-jinân wa-rûb al-janân*, vol. III: 36.

¹⁹¹ Mullâ Fath Allâh Kâshânî. *Tafsîr al-kabîr al-manhaj al-sâdiqîn fî ilzâm al-mukhâlifîn*, vol. II: 223.

¹⁹² TBT. vol. III: 203-205. Cf. also Ayoub, M. *The Qur'an and Its Interpretation*, vol. II, *The House of 'Imrân*: 122-130.

logical interpretation, but, unlike other Shī'a scholars, draws no comparison between Maryam and Fâtima. Maryam's choice implies an excellence and precedence over other women in something given specifically to her and not to others, that is, the virginal birth of her son. It is precisely in this aspect of her life, to the exclusion of all other women, that she enjoys a special precedence.

The Shī'a translation of the Qur'ân, with its commentary by Mir Ahmed 'Alî opts for the solution that Maryam is above all women of her own time, appealing to the authority of Muhammad, who said that Maryam was the most blessed woman of her age, but that Fâtima is the most blessed woman of all ages. To support this, Mir Ahmed 'Alî appeals to Q. 33: 33, which establishes the purity of the 'people of the house': Fâtima is the only woman of the five, and therefore the most blessed of all women. The objection is raised that Maryam is mentioned by name in the Qur'ân, while Fâtima is mentioned only by implication, suggesting that Maryam is superior. He answers that Maryam is mentioned because it is necessary to defend her chastity, whereas Fâtima's chastity is uncontested, and her physical and spiritual purity is recognized by all. Fâtima is, furthermore, the seed of Ibrâhîm and the daughter of Muhammad, the seal (*khâtîm*) of the prophets. She is the wife of an Imâm who is next only to Muhammad in all respects as of one and the same Divine light. She is the mother of eleven holy Imâms of the same grade and the same Divine light, with the last one being the one through whom the Divine will and justice shall prevail on the earth.

Faced with apparent contradictions and inconsistencies, it may be noted that those Traditions, carried by Sunnî transmitters, and which place Fâtima in some degree of exaltation (either as mistress of the women of the worlds or of the women of the people of paradise, or as mistress of the people of paradise except for Maryam, or even as one of four) far outweigh those Traditions that omit her name altogether, or raise someone else (like Khadija) to this status. The position of Âsiya, daughter of Muzâhim and wife of Pharaoh, remains incongruous: in the Qur'ân, in contrast with the unfaithful wives of the prophets Nûh and Lût, she is offered as a model of faith:

«And Allah citeth an example for those who believe: the wife of Pharaoh when she said: My Lord! Build for me a

home with Thee in the Garden, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from evil-doing folk» (Q. 66: 11).

But this is not the only time that the name *Âsiya* will be connected to that of *Fâtima*, as we shall see when we examine the narratives of *Fâtima's* birth.

After the death of Muhammad two serious events thrust *Fâtima* abruptly into prominence. The first was the alleged attempt to force 'Alî's allegiance (*bay'â*) to Abû Bakr, an event that is recorded by a number of Sunnî transmitters and is underscored by the Shî'a. It appears that the intention of 'Umar, Abû Bakr and some others, angered by 'Alî's refusal to pay allegiance, was to take him by force to the mosque and compel him to do so. An armed group went to the house of 'Alî and *Fâtima*, threatening to set fire to it. They forced their way in, seriously injuring *Fâtima* in the process, causing her to miscarry her unborn child, and wielding their swords in the house. There are countless reports of this incident, all of them fragmented and omitting one or more details.¹⁹³ The report of al-Tabarî reads:

"Umar b. al-Khattâb came to the house of 'Alî. Talhah and al-Zubayr and some of the Muhājirûn were [also] in the house [with 'Alî]. 'Umar cried out, 'By God, either you come out to render the oath of allegiance [to Abû Bakr], or I will set the house on fire'."¹⁹⁴

Admittedly, al-Tabarî makes no mention of violence against *Fâtima*: in a footnote, the translator of the text merely mentions that, "The scene grew violent and *Fâtimah* was furious."¹⁹⁵

The Sunnî transmitters who carry this story are cautious in its telling: for the most part, the threat by 'Umar to burn everyone (including *Fâtima*) alive is the only actual violence mentioned. Ibn

¹⁹³ For Sunnî accounts, cf. BLD¹. vol. I, nn. 1184, 1186: 586; YTB². vol. IX, n. 1818: 186-187; HDI. vol. II: 23, vol. VI: 11, 47-49. For Shî'a accounts, cf. YQB. vol. II: 141.

¹⁹⁴ YTB². vol. IX, n. 1818: 186-187.

¹⁹⁵ YTB². vol. IX, n. 1818, p 187, nt. 1291.

al-Hadîd includes in his account, besides the storming of the house, the wielding of swords and the beating of Zubayr, a screaming and angry Fâtima who adjures God and vows never again to speak to 'Umar.¹⁹⁶ Among the Sunnî sects, claims al-Shahrastânî, the al-Nazzâmiyya believe that 'Umar, besides threatening to burn the house, struck Fâtima and caused her to miscarry.¹⁹⁷

Muhammad Fadlallâh, a modern Lebanese Shî'a reformist (and spiritual leader of the Hizbullâh movement), refuses to allow himself to be influenced by the Traditions about the physical violence perpetrated against her, claiming that the stories are weakly documented or contradictory and that there are too many legends that are exaggerated and hard to prove. He does not, however, deny some sort of attack.¹⁹⁸ In point of fact, a number of Sunnî sources record that 'Alî only pledged his allegiance after the death of Fâtima:¹⁹⁹ this allegiance is hard to fathom, not solely in terms of waiting for his wife to die, but also in terms of 'Alî ever making such a pledge in the light of the alleged violence perpetrated at his house and the death of his unborn child. One of the reasons given in some Sunnî sources is that he noticed a decline in his popularity after his wife's death.²⁰⁰

The second event was the denial of Fâtima's claim to Fadak,²⁰¹ a small town allocated to Muhammad after the conquest of the Khaybar: he dedicated its not inconsiderable revenues to the

¹⁹⁶ Ibn al-Hadîd takes a view held by some other Shî'a transmitters: cf. HDI. vol. VI: 11, 47-49.

¹⁹⁷ SHR. vol. I: 57.

¹⁹⁸ Rosiny, S. "The Tragedy of Fâtima al-Zahrâ' in the Debate of Two Shi'ite Theologians in Lebanon": 207-219.

¹⁹⁹ BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 37, n. 545: 381-384; MSL. vol. III, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-jihâd*), bb. 16, n. 52: 1380-1381; YTB². vol. IX, nn. 1825, 1826: 196-197; BRR. vol. III, n. 1633: 973; KTR¹. vol. V: 249, 286. Among the Shî'a, cf. for e.g. MJL. vol. XXVIII, bb. 4: 391.

²⁰⁰ BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 37, n. 545: 381-384; MSL. vol. III, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-jihâd*), bb. 16, n. 52: 1380-1381; YTB². vol. IX, nn. 1825, 1826: 196-197; BRR. vol. III, n. 1633: 973; HDI. vol. II: 22; KTR¹. vol. V: 249, 286.

²⁰¹ S^cD. vol. II: 273-275, vol. X: 28-29; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 62 (*Kitâb fadâ'il ashâb al-nabî*), ch. 13, n. 60: 49-50; BLD². n. 119: 37-38; RAZ. vol. XV, Part 30, *Sûrat al-hashr*: 284; KTR¹. vol. V: 249. Among the Shî'a, cf. YQB. vol. II: 142.

needs of the poor (travellers and members of the Banû Hishâm). After Muhammad's death Fâtima asked Abû Bakr to hand over the possessions of her father he was still holding. Over the land of Fadak and over the share of the Khaybar, Abû Bakr refused, insisting that he had heard Muhammad say that everything he left would be a public property for benevolent purposes (*sadaqa*).

This is somewhat contradicted by a Tradition in which Muhammad told Fâtima that she could ask anything from his wealth, but that he could not save her from the Fire (or, in other accounts, he could obtain nothing, either good or bad, for her from God).²⁰² The Traditions narrating the event suggest two or more attempts to regain Fadak, one with Fâtima and Ibn 'Abbâs working in concert,²⁰³ another with Fâtima sending some unnamed agent (possibly 'Alî, for al-Bukhârî notes in his account that when Abû Bakr refused, 'Alî acknowledged his superiority)²⁰⁴ and still another involving Fâtima alone: "From whom will you inherit when you die?" she demands of Abû Bakr, and when he replies, "My children and my family", she retorts, "Then why can't we inherit from the Prophet?"²⁰⁵ In fact, there is also a recorded transmission of 'Alî

²⁰² S^CD. vol. II: 273-275; HNB. vol. III, *Musnad Abî Hurayra*, n. 8609: 262, nn. 8734, 8735: 284, n. 9800: 460, n. 10730: 604; BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 51 (*Kitâb al-wasâya*), ch. 11, n. 16: 12-13, vol. IV, bk. 56 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), ch. 12, n. 728: 479.

²⁰³ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad Abî Bakr al-Siddîq*, n. 9: 19, n. 58: 32-33; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 13, n. 368: 247-248, vol. VIII, bk. 80 (*Kitâb al-farâ'id*), ch. 3, n. 718: 471-472; (al-Bukhârî and Ibn Hanbal, among others, transmit that they went to claim 'their' share, suggesting that Ibn 'Abbâs was not merely being altruistic. In Ibn Hanbal's transmission Fâtima appears to retain no anger against Abû Bakr); YTB². vol. IX, n. 1825: 196; HDI. vol. VI: 46; KTR¹. vol. V: 285. Among the Shî'a, cf. for e.g. MJL. vol. XXVIII, bb. 4: 353.

²⁰⁴ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad Abî Bakr al-Siddîq*, n. 14: 20, n. 55: 31-32; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-ashâb*), ch. 13, n. 60: 49-50, vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 37, n. 545: 381-384; MSL. vol. III, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-jihâd*), bb. 16, n. 52: 1380-1381; ADD. vol. II, bk. 19 (*Kitâb al-kharâj*), bb. 19: 128-130.

²⁰⁵ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad Abî Bakr al-Siddîq*, n. 25: 25, n. 60: 33, n. 79: 39, vol. III, *Musnad Abî Hurayra*, n. 8644: 269 (in these last two instances she approaches Abû Bakr and 'Umar together, and they both claim to have heard the interdiction of Muhammad against a prophet leaving inheritance); BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 53 (*Kitâb fard al-khums*), ch. 1, n. 325: 208-

going to 'Umar in an attempt to gain for Fâtima what Abû Bakr had previously refused,²⁰⁶ as well as one of Fâtima approaching Abû Bakr and 'Umar together.²⁰⁷ Nor was Fâtima the only one to attempt this: the wives of Muhammad, risking the wrath of 'Â'isha, themselves sent 'Uthmân to see Abû Bakr to claim their share of Muhammad's inheritance. He refused them on the same grounds that Fâtima had been refused.²⁰⁸ It must be admitted that this latter Tradition helps to highlight his apparent impartiality and lack of bias for or against Fâtima, and might have been introduced precisely for that purpose.

Scholars from both sides, including al-Suyûtî, in their commentary on the verse, «*give the kinsman his due*» (Q. 17: 26), hold that when this verse was revealed, Muhammad gave Fâtima the village of Fadak, which he saw as part of the peace treaty between him and the Jews²⁰⁹ (al-Majlisî disagrees, recording that it was with the sending down of the same words, but recorded in Q. 30: 38).²¹⁰ Abû Bakr demanded that Fâtima produce witnesses that Muhammad had given Fadak to her, but she could only produce her husband and a woman named Umm Ayman.²¹¹ Abû Bakr, insisting

209; ADD. vol. II, bk. 19 (*Kitâb al-kharâj*), bb. 19: 128-130; TRM. vol. V, bk. 22 (*Kitâb al-sayr*), bb. 44, nn. 1608, 1609: 331-332; BLD¹. vol. I, n. 1044: 552 BLD². n. 115: 35-36; KTR¹. vol. V: 285, vol. VI: 333. Among the Shî'a, cf. for e.g. MJL. vol. XXIX, n. 41: 128-129.

²⁰⁶ BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 53 (*Kitâb fard al-khums*), ch. 1, n. 326: 209-213.

²⁰⁷ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad Abî Bakr al-Siddîq*, n. 79: 39; vol. III, *Musnad Abî Hurayra*, n. 8644: 269.

²⁰⁸ BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 13, n. 367: 243-247. In some accounts the wives are reprimanded by 'Â'isha for wanting to do this. Cf. MSL. vol. III, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-jibâd*), bb. 16, n. 51: 1379; ADD. vol. II, bk. 19 (*Kitâb al-kharâj*), bb. 19: 130; BLD². n. 110: 34; KTR¹, vol. V: 285.

²⁰⁹ BLD². n. 119: 37-38; DHB². vol. II, n. 4560: 492; KTR². vol. IV, *Sûrat al-isrâ'*: 302 (he denies the possibility, insisting that the verse was revealed long before Muhammad gave Fadak to Fâtima); SYT. vol. IV, *Sûrat al-isrâ'*: 320; HAY. vol. VII, *Sûrat al-isrâ'*: 49, who declares the Tradition is 'weak' (*da'îf*) and 'abandoned' (*matrûk*). Among the Shî'a, cf. BHR. vol. II, Part 15, *Sûrat al-isrâ'*, n. 1: 414-415 (insisting that Muhammad was ordered by God to give Fadak to Fâtima); also, TFA⁵. vol. VI, *Sûrat al-isrâ'*: 468.

²¹⁰ MJL. vol. XXIX, n. 41: 127.

²¹¹ BLD². nn. 113, 114: 35.

that she would need two male (or one male and two female) witnesses, maintained his position, based on what he claimed to have heard from Muhammad, that Fadak was to remain a matter of public charity.²¹²

There follow accounts of her anger with Abû Bakr: some say she refused to see him, remaining angry with him until she died,²¹³ while others, such as Ibn Sa'd, transmit that she saw him with great reluctance, and only because this pleased 'Alî. While some record that she turned her face to the wall, or reduced Abû Bakr to tears with a stern lecture, Ibn Sa'd reports merely that "she was satisfied with him."²¹⁴

Sunnî and Shî'a scholars agree that Fâtima died in the same year as her father, the tenth of the *hijra*. Some hold she died reconciled to Abû Bakr, others not. Some say she faced death calmly, washing herself, anointing herself with balm, dressing in coarse garments and insisting (to 'Alî or to her sister-in-law Asmâ' bt. 'Umayy) that she should not be uncovered after death.²¹⁵ This fear that her wasted form might be seen extended to her having Asmâ' create a special bier for her.²¹⁶ But others relate a different story: that she severely rebuked Muhammad's wives and the Quraysh

²¹² Veccia Vaglieri, L. "Fadak": 725-727.

²¹³ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad Abî Bakr al-Siddîq*, n. 25: 25, n. 60: 33; BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 37, n. 545: 381-384, vol. VIII, bk. 80 (*Kitâb al-farâ'id*), ch. 3, n. 718: 471-472; MSL. vol. III, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-jihâd*), bb. 16, n. 52: 1380-1381; YTB². vol. IX, n. 1825: 196; HDI. vol. VI: 46; KTR¹. vol. V: 249-250, 285.

²¹⁴ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 28. Cf. also KTR¹. vol. VI: 333, who claims that Abû Bakr came to her on her deathbed, asked forgiveness and was reconciled with her.

²¹⁵ SCD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 28; BLD¹. vol. I, n. 865: 402; ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 42-43; RHB.: 53; KTR¹. vol. VI: 333; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*, n. 830: 367.

²¹⁶ According to a number of Shî'a transmitters, Fâtima was the first for whom a bier was created: cf. KLY. vol. III, bk. 11 (*Kitâb al-janâ'iz*), bb. *al-Nawâdir*, n. 6: 251; SDQ³. vol. I, bb. *al-Nawâdir*, n. 597: 194; TFA¹. vol. I, bb. 23, nn. 184-185: 469; TBR¹.: 141; HRR¹. vol. III, bb. 52, nn. 3454-3455, 3457-3458: 219-220; MJL. vol. XXII, bb. 2: 202, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, nn. 42-43: 212, vol. LXXVIII, bb. 6, n. 7: 249, n. 9: 250; NTR. vol. II, bb. 43, n. 1-2187: 358, n. 5-2191: 361.

women who came to visit her, and that ‘Â’isha was prevented from entering.²¹⁷

While Lammens posits that ‘Alî came late for her death, the sources recount that ‘Alî and Asmâ’ bt. ‘Umayy washed her,²¹⁸ buried her by night and performed the prayers: other accounts say that these were done by Abû Bakr (although still other accounts claim he did not know of her death, kept deliberately uninformed by ‘Alî),²¹⁹ and that she was buried by night almost certainly in the Baqî’ cemetery (where a number of others assisted ‘Alî).²²⁰

²¹⁷ RHB.: 53; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*: 524. Among the Shî’a, cf. YQB. vol. II: 128-129.

²¹⁸ S^CD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 28. Certainly, Ibn Sa’d insinuates that ‘Alî was not present at the moment of her death: he offers contradictory Traditions, positing that ‘Alî ordered someone else to wash her, but also recording a Tradition which has ‘Alî doing the washing himself. However, BLD¹. vol. I, n. 865: 402 suggests strongly that ‘Alî was present when Fâtima died, and that he washed her when she was on the point of death. Cf. also; YTB². vol. X, n. 1869: 39; ATH¹. vol. II: 230-231; HDI. vol. VI: 46; KTR¹. vol. V: 286, vol. VI: 333 (‘Alî, Asmâ’ bt. ‘Umayy and Salamâ Umm Râfi’ washed her); SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*, n. 830: 367; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4434: 441. Among the Shî’a, cf. YQB. vol. II: 128.

²¹⁹ BUK¹. vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maghâzî*), ch. 37, n. 545: 381-384; BLD¹. vol. I, n. 865: 402 (who adds that ‘Umar was equally uninformed); HDI. vol. VI: 46; KTR¹. vol. V: 286; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*, n. 830: 367 (who says the Tradition about Abû Bakr saying the prayers is weak).

²²⁰ S^CD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 29-30 transmits a number of strands claiming, alternatively, that ‘Alî performed the prayers and buried her at night, or that ‘Abbâs ‘Abd al-Muttalib prayed over her and that ‘Alî, ‘Abbâs ‘Abd al-Muttalib and Fadl b. ‘Abbâs buried her. Another Tradition says that Abû Bakr performed the prayers, and that four people helped to bury her. Cf. also YTB². vol. X, n. 1869: 39; ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 42-43; ATH¹. vol. II: 230-231; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*: 524; KTR¹. vol. VI: 333; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ’*, n. 830: 367; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4434: 441.

As for her nickname (*kunya*)²²¹ *Umm Abī-hā* ('the mother of her father'), it is possibly of Shī'a origin, and is found in later sources.²²² The Shī'a claim that she had learned that the last of her descendants would be named Muhammad. Considering the lateness of the sources, Veccia Vaglieri ponders a connection with Mary's title 'Mother of God' in Catholicism. In view of the similarity of the theologies constructed around the two women by their adherents, this is a distinct possibility, but hard to prove.

While the sources exult in the beauty of her sister Ruqayya, they pass in silence over Fâtima. One well-known Tradition, on the authority of 'Ā'isha and transmitted by numerous Sunnî authorities, tells of how her walk resembled that of Muhammad:²²³ but it also highlights the love and gentleness with which Muhammad ostensibly treated her, bringing into question some of Lammens' opinions. Lammens is also inaccurate in his claim about her perpetual sickness and weakness, and we must ponder his sources: she bore four (or possibly five) children, was actively present during at least one major battle, ran the household almost single handedly, made no fewer than two journeys to Mecca and campaigned energetically on behalf of her husband's claim for the Caliphate.

²²¹ From the root meaning to speak of someone or something in an allusive way. If the name is of a person, the *kunya* indicates the relationship of parent to child, and would consequently comprise two parts: *Abū* or *Umm* in connection with a second term. It is possible to distinguish between this, the 'real' *kunya*, and a metaphorical, figurative *kunya*, in which this bond of kinship is impossible.

²²² BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, bb. *al-Fâ'*, n. 4057: 1899; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*: 520; KTR¹. vol. VI: 332; SQL¹. vol. IV, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*, n. 830: 365; SQL⁴. vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, n. 4434: 440.

²²³ S^CD. vol. X, *Dhikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtima*): 27; HNB. vol. X, *Abâdîth Fâtima*, n. 26475: 157-158; BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 56 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), ch. 24, n. 819: 526-527, vol. VI, bk. 61 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-qur'ân*), ch. 7, (n.n.): 485, vol. VIII, bk. 74 (*Kitâb al-isti'dhân*), ch. 43, n. 301: 201-202; MSL. vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb fadâ'il al-sabâba*), bb. 10 *Fadâ'il Fâtima bt. al-nabî*, nn. 98, 99: 1904-1905; NSA².: 78-80; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rîfat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4795: 181; ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 39-40; BRR. vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ' wa-kunâ-hunna*, n. 4057: 1896; SQL³. vol. VIII, bb. 84, n. 4434: 171; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*: 522; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhikr manâqib 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 43. Among the Shī'a cf. SDQ¹.: 595.

The Shî'a transmitters and hagiographers highlight many of her moral attributes, making her a perfect model for all women ("the woman that Islam wants a woman to be" insists Shariati).²²⁴ In fact, in his famous work *Fatima is Fatima*, Shariati, while stressing her humanity above all the supernatural qualities attached to her, imputes to her innumerable virtues, but without ever providing his reader with a single source:²²⁵ another hagiographer, the Jordanian Abû Muhammad Ordoni, faithfully offers primary and secondary Arabic and Persian sources for the incidents of her life, drawing from these incidents the virtues which he weaves carefully into the pattern of her life.²²⁶

She appears to have been hardworking and diligent, and to have enjoyed helping others. It seems certain too that she was not as diffident as is claimed: it was she who prevented 'Alî from taking a second wife and this, together with her reaction against Abû Bakr concerning Fadak, her behavior during the forcing of 'Alî's allegiance and her house to house campaigns to win support for her husband's candidacy. Ibn al-Hadîd describes her on a donkey, accompanying 'Alî to the houses of the *ansâr* (the Medinan supporters of Muhammad who gave him refuge after the *hijra*) to ask their backing, with Fâtima requesting specifically that they would side with 'Alî. Their response is recorded in the text: the people have already given their allegiance to Abû Bakr, but if only 'Alî had come earlier they would not have turned from him. "Should I have left the Messenger of God, lifeless in his house and not prepared him, in order to come to the people and contest with them about his power?" protests 'Alî. Fâtima's response is laconic: "The father of al-Husayn has done nothing except what he ought."²²⁷ In that pithy sentence, she encapsulates all the great Shî'a claim and underscores their overriding conviction that justice was ever on their side.

²²⁴ Shariati, A. *Red Shi'ism*. 5.

²²⁵ Shariati, A. *Fatima is Fatima*.

²²⁶ Ordoni, A.M. *Fatima the Gracious*.

²²⁷ HDI. vol. VI: 13.

2 THE SUPERNATURAL QUALITIES IN THE ANNUNCIATION AND BIRTH OF FÂTIMA IN SHÎ'A TRADITION, TEACHING AND PIETY

“Fâtima is not like the women of the children of Âdam: she is not defective, as they are defective.”²²⁸

This Tradition, which has as its context the Tradition of Fâtima's conception as a result her father eating mystical fruit, is declared impossible by the Sunnî transmitters al-Jawzî and al-Haythamî (but not by al-Khawârizmî): in fact, although they are not alone among the Sunnî in carrying the Tradition of the fruit, they are almost the only ones who record this particular part of it. They reject not simply this specific element of the Tradition, but the Tradition as a whole, primarily because they cannot accept the dating of Fâtima's birth after the 'night journey'. The eighth-form verb *i'talla-ya'tallu* carries the sense of being 'weak' or 'defective', and in spite of its rejection by al-Haythamî, the Tradition offers an intimation of the level to which Fâtima has been elevated. The Shî'a transmitters Ibn Tâ'ûs and al-Majlisî qualify this Tradition, in the sense that the lack of defectiveness concerns the absence of menstruation. But it is clear that before the vigorous theology constructed around her in the Tradition of the Shî'a, the almost grey figure of Fâtima in the Sunnî corpus seems to fade and vanish away: for the Shî'a employ language, concepts and a mystical vision about Fâtima that are so wholly different from their Sunnî counterparts that at times it is

²²⁸ KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 33: 105; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*: 413; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 202. Among the Shî'a, cf. TST². vol. I, n. 163: 111; MJL. vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 36; vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 14: 16.

scarcely credible that they are treating of the same woman. She is certainly not without substance in the Sunnî corpus of Traditions: but Lammens contends that she is an altogether dull and lackluster creature, a contention which is not completely accurate even if, like him, one discards the whole Shî'a corpus and follows the Sunnî alone. If the most radical notion found about her among the Sunnî scholars (besides the minority who carry the Tradition of Muhammad eating heavenly fruit) is that she is, ostensibly, the mistress of the women of Paradise (or at least, of the women of the Muslim community and of the worlds) – and even this is not entirely settled among the transmitters – the Shî'a move considerably further than this, transmitting Traditions about her creation from light and her concomitant pre-existence, and the altogether miraculous nature of her conception and birth.

There is no 'immaculate conception' in the theology of Fâtima, although, like the rest of the 'people of the house' and the Imâms, she is regarded as infallible and sinless (*ma'sûma*). The technical nature of this sinless state is not clearly articulated in terms of its precise timing and how God achieved such a favored state in His creature, although the Traditions surrounding her being named 'Fâtima' suggest that her purification from sin took place before her birth.²²⁹ There are three conspicuous strands of theology which merit appraisal. The first is the notion of Fâtima's creation from light and her pre-existence, for this stands at the heart of the Shî'a mystical vision of her personhood. The second is her conception by Khadija, miraculous not only by reason of Divine intervention (such as a form of 'annunciation' to Muhammad by an angel), but also by reason of Muhammad eating miraculous fruit in Heaven: it is ostensibly as a result of this that Fâtima was conceived, making her, in Muhammad's words, a "maiden of Paradise in human form" (*hawra' insiyya*)²³⁰ and causing him to say, in a Tradition carried with

²²⁹ As regards her son al-Husayn, the texts attempt to articulate the technical nature and timing of his sinless state by maintaining that he was born already cleansed and purified by God. Cf. for example SDQ¹. n. 5: 136; FNR. vol. I: 155; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 16: 243, n. 24: 256.

²³⁰ Among the Sunnî, cf. BGD. vol. V, n. 2481: 87, vol. XII, n. 6772: 331; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 33: 105; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*: 411-413, bb. *Fî dbîkîr tazwîj Fâtima bi-'Alî*: 421; SFI. vol. II, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 184; MTQ. vol. V: 97.

diverse wording even by some Sunnî transmitters, that, “Whenever I long for the fragrance of Paradise I smell the neck of Fâtima.”²³¹ A third theological component concerns the supernatural events surrounding the pregnancy of Khadîja and the parturition of Fâtima.

At the very core of Shî’a mystical theology and its understanding of the ‘people of the house’ stands the so-called *ashbâh* Tradition in which Âdam, and sometimes Hawwâ’ (Eve) with him, sees five figures of light in his own shape and form prostrating before God, and, thinking himself to be alone, asks after their identity:

“When God created Âdam and Hawwâ’, they strutted through Paradise and said: Who are better than we? At that moment they noticed an image of a girl never seen before: from this girl came an illuminating light so bright that it almost blinded the eyes. They said: Lord, what is this? He answered: This is the image of Fâtima, the mistress of the women of your descendants. Âdam asked: What is the crown on her head? God said: Her husband ‘Alî. Âdam then asked: What are the two earrings? God replied: Her two sons. This existed

Among the Shî’a, cf. SDQ¹. n. 7: 460; SDQ⁵. vol. I, bb. 11, n. 3: 115; SDQ⁶. n. 53: 396; FNR. vol. I: 149; TBR². vol. II: 408; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ’*: 383; ABD.: 240; MJL. vol. IV, bb. 1, n. 4: 3, vol. VIII, bb. 23, n. 6: 119, n. 160: 188, vol. XLIII, bb. 1, nn. 2-3: 4, bb. 2, n. 17: 18, bb. 3, n. 42: 43, vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 33: 240.

²³¹ Some alternative versions read ‘kiss’ instead of ‘smell’ and ‘fragrance’ instead of ‘neck’. Among the Sunnî, cf. HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4801: 183-184 (with an annotation of rejection by al-Dhahabî in the notes); BGD. vol. V, n. 2481: 87; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zahrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 33: 105; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*: 410-411, 413, who condemns it as absolutely false; RHB.: 36; SFI. vol. II, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ’*: 184; SYT. vol. IV, *Sûrat al-isrâ’*: 282; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 202; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhikr manâqib ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 42.

hidden in My knowledge two thousand years before I created you.”²³²

This *ashbâh* Tradition, most often addressed to Âdam (wherein his question is always: “Did You create someone before me?”) and with its application of a pre-existent state to Muhammad, ‘Alî, Fâtima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn (but not the ostensibly miscarried al-Muhassin or the daughters of Fâtima), is found in this or comparable wording throughout the corpus of Shi’a Tradition. One would hardly expect the Sunnî to carry it: in fact, it is transmitted by al-Khawârizmî, who makes no comment on it, by al-Jawzî²³³ and by Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalânî, who includes the eleventh Imâm Abû Muhammad al-Hasan b. ‘Alî al-‘Askarî in his chain of transmission. Al-‘Asqalânî condemns the Tradition as absolutely false as does al-Jawzî before him. Another Sunnî scholar, al-Saffûrî, transmits the Tradition in a particularly detailed narrative: in his *Nuzhat al-majâlis*, Fâtima is envisaged as a brilliant girl from whom light pours forth, and crowned with a gold and diamond crown, the likes of which Âdam has never seen. Her husband ‘Alî is a young man, as beautiful as the Qur’anic Yûsuf, reclining on a golden bed in a ruby palace.²³⁴

The Shi’a al-Majlisî records an account more diverse and detailed than his Sunnî counterparts:

“The Messenger of God said that when God created Âdam and blew into him of His spirit, Âdam looked at the right side of the Throne, and there were five figures, and he said: Lord, have You created any of mankind before me? He said, No. He said: Then who are these whose names I see? He answered: These five are of your descendents. Were it not for them, I would not have created you, nor would I have created Paradise, or the Throne, or the Seat, or the heavens, or the earth,

²³² KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’îl Fâtima al-Zahrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 37: 106-107; SQL². vol. III, n. 1409: 346-347.

²³³ Cf. JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*: 414; SQL². vol. III, n. 1409: 347.

²³⁴ SFI. vol. II, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ’*: 185.

or the angels, or the *jinn*, or mankind. For these five I cleft a name from My names. I am the Praised (*al-Mahmūd*) and this is Muhammad. I am the Most High (*al-‘Alī*) and this is ‘Alī. I am the Creator (*al-Fâtir*) and this is Fâtima. I am the Master of beneficence (*dhū al-ihsân*) and this is al-Hasan. I am the Beneficent (*al-Muhsin*) and this is al-Husayn. I have sworn by Myself that no-one shall come to Me with love for any of them in his heart the weight of a mustard seed, except that I shall make him enter My Paradise. I have sworn by my might that no-one shall come to Me with hatred for any of them in his heart the weight of a mustard seed, except that I shall make him enter My Fire. Âdam, these are the best of My creation, by whom I save whom I save and by whom I destroy whom I destroy.”²³⁵

In another, very similar version of this Tradition, al-Majlisî offers an alternative derivation of the names:

“God said: Âdam, these figures are the best of My creatures and of my creation. This is Muhammad, and I am the Praiseworthy (*al-Hamīd*), the Praised (*al-Mahmūd*) in My works. I have cleft for him a name from My names. This is ‘Alī, and I am the Most High (*al-‘Alī*), the Great (*al-‘Azīm*). I have cleft for him a name from My names. This is Fâtima, and I am the Creator (*al-Fâtir*) of the heavens and the earth, the Weaner (*al-Fâtīm*) of My enemies from My mercy on the day of My final judgment, the Weaner of My friends from what afflicts and dishonors them. I have cleft for her a name from My names. This is al-Hasan and this is al-Husayn, and I am the Beneficent (*al-*

²³⁵ MJL. vol. XXVII, bb. 10, n. 10: 5. Cf. also. RWD³. bb. 3, n. 10: 39; ABD.: 52; MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 11, nn. 61, 62: 361-362; vol. XXV, bb. 1, n. 8: 5-6; vol. XXVI, bb. 6, n. 15: 273; vol. XXVII, bb. 7, n. 67: 199-200; vol. XXXVI, bb. 40, n. 18: 216-217, n. 21: 222.

Muhsin), the Embellisher (*al-Mujmil*). I have cleft for them a name from My names. These are the best of My creatures, the distinguished of My creation. Through them I choose, through them I give, through them I punish and through them I reward. Gain access to Me through them, Âdam, and whenever calamity befalls you, I will make them your intercessors to me. I have sworn by Myself a true oath: I will not delude one who hopes through them and I will not refuse one who asks through them. Consequently, when sin brought him down, God, powerful and lofty, called him through them and he repented and He pardoned him.”²³⁶

These two Traditions articulate some of the most crucial Shî‘a theology pertaining to Fâtima and concomitantly to the ‘people of the house’. They are the best of all God’s creatures²³⁷ and of all His creation: God accomplishes everything, including the whole of creation, through them. They are the *raison d’être* for everything that God does, and the very salvation of humankind depends upon love for them. Each of them bears a name cleft from a Divine name,²³⁸ and they are intercessors for humankind with God.

But these same Traditions lead to an unusual and more arcane strand, a *hadîth qudsî*,²³⁹ recorded by al-Mûsawî in his seven-volume *al-Kawthar*. He names only two sources for the Tradition, but fails to give adequate details. The first, which he names as *al-‘Awâlim* is ostensibly the work entitled *‘Awâlim al-‘ulûm* by al-

²³⁶ MJL. vol. XI, bb. 2, n. 25: 150-151; vol. XXVI, bb. 7, n. 10: 326-327.

²³⁷ ABD.: 803; MJL. vol. II, bb. 3, n. 9: 164-165; NTR. vol. VIII, bb. 15, n. 9229-3: 138; vol. XXVI, bb. 6, n. 15: 273.

²³⁸ MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 11, n. 61: 361-362; vol. XXVII, bb. 7, n. 67: 199-200; vol. XXXVI, bb. 40, n. 21: 222; vol. XXXVI, bb. 41, nn. 82, 83: 261; vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 32: 62.

²³⁹ A specific category of Traditions attributed to God Himself and communicated to Muhammad, through the mediation of Jibrîl, in a number of different ways (such as inspiration or dreams).

Bahrânî,²⁴⁰ a pupil of al-Majlisî. The second, which he names as *Mustadrak safinat al-bihâr*, is possibly linked to *Safinat al-bihâr wa-madînat al-bikam wa-l-âthâr*, an index of al-Majlisî's *Bihâr al-anwâr* compiled by 'Abbâs al-Qummî.²⁴¹ The Tradition itself is carried neither by al-Majlisî, nor by any of the books of Tradition regarded as canonical by the Shî'a, nor in the major works of the well-known transmitters named in the chain of transmission (al-Hillî²⁴² and al-Sadûq). It must therefore be treated with great caution. In essence, the Tradition claims that God created Muhammad and 'Alî for the sake of Fâtima, so that she becomes God's underlying principle for all His creative activity:

“On the authority of the Messenger of God, on the authority of God, may He be blessed and exalted, Who said: Ahmad! Were it not for you, I would not have created the celestial spheres, and were it not for 'Alî I would not have created you, and were it not for Fâtima I would not have created either of you.”²⁴³

The implication of the Tradition is that the status of Fâtima is more exalted than that of her father, reminding one of the extremist position of a group like the Nusayrî, for whom Fâtima is the

²⁴⁰ 'Abd Allâh b. Nûr Allâh al-Bahrânî (d. 1110/1698: Cf. GAL S. II: 504).

²⁴¹ 'Abbâs al-Qummî (d. 1359/1940: Cf. GAS II: 573). Besides noting that his work is based on al-Majlisî's, Brockelmann provides no further information. Cf. Kohlberg, E. “Shî'î *Hadîth*”: 307.

²⁴² Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Fahd al-Asadî al-Hillî (d. 841/1438). Cf. Modarressi, H. *Tradition and Survival*: 416.

²⁴³ Al-Mûsawî, M. *al-Kawthar*, v. I: 111. The same author, in Part 3, ch. 2 of his first volume, claims a Tradition in which God claims that had it not been for Fâtima, He would have created neither the heavens, nor the earth, nor the Throne, nor Paradise, nor hell, nor even Âdam. This is misleading, for a closer examination of the text reveals that it forms part of the *ashbâh* Tradition: in fact, the text does not anywhere suggest that God created all these things for the sake of Fâtima alone, but rather that He created them all for the sake of the five ‘figures’ seen by Âdam (Muhammad, 'Alî, Fâtima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn). This is more consistent with the classical Shî'a renditions of the *ashbâh* Tradition.

feminine manifestation of the masculine deity. While the Shī'a corpus has no lack of Traditions insisting that God would not have created Âdam or any other part of creation were it not for the 'people of the house',²⁴⁴ we do not find any hint that Fâtima alone is the Divine incentive for creation.

In itself, the notion of pre-existence is certainly not foreign to Sunnî Islam. This is confirmed by the mystical theology of the 'Muhammadan Light' (*nûr muhammadi*), a name given to Muhammad's pre-existent entity ('entity', for there was much disagreement over whether this pre-existence was in body or in soul). Not all the scholars or theologians are agreed upon the nature of this pre-existence, or about what was created immediately after the 'Muhammadan Light'. In a general way, the theological tradition, which has a number of variations, posits that Muhammad was the first and most exalted of God's creation. For example:

"...before everything else God created from His light the light of your Prophet. He made this light turn by His power where He wanted it to turn. In that time, the Well-Guarded Tablet did not exist, nor did the Pen, nor Paradise, nor the Infernal Fire, nor angels, nor sky, nor earth, nor sun, nor moon, nor demon, nor man. When God the Most High wanted to create creatures, He divided this light into four parts. From the first part He created the Pen, from the second the Tablet, from the third the Throne, and then He divided the fourth part into another four parts. From the first He created the skies, from the second the earth, from the third Paradise and Hell, and then He divided the fourth part into four parts. From the first He created the vision of the believers, from the second the light of their hearts, which is in fact the knowledge of the Most High, from the third

²⁴⁴ SDQ⁵. vol. I, bb. 28, n. 67: 306; RWD³. bb. 3, n. 10: 39; MJL. vol. II, bb. 3, n. 9: 164-165; vol. XVI, bb. 11, n. 62: 362; vol. XXVI, bb. 6, n. 15: 273; vol. XXVII, bb. 10, n. 10: 5. Cf. also JQM.: 128; DAY. vol. II: 145.

He created the lights of their affability, which is the faith in the One God..."²⁴⁵

For scholars like al-Ghazâlî²⁴⁶ and Ibn Taymiyya,²⁴⁷ the primordial creation of the Prophet did not imply pre-existence, but only pre-destination. But al-Subkî²⁴⁸ opposed them, supporting the dogma of pre-existence. Rubin²⁴⁹ points out that while the early corpus of Tradition holds that Muhammad was the first of all the prophets to be created (and thus posits his pre-existence), the same corpus identified the 'Muhammadan Light' with the spermatic substance in the loins of his Arab ancestors. Bearing in their loins the Divine 'Muhammadan substance', his Arab ancestors are designated as true Muslims, and even as prophets. Through the process of procreation, this light reaches the physical Prophet. God is conceived of as light, which emanates in its luminosity and 'personifies' (or 'individualizes') itself as the primordial 'Muhammadan Light'. This issue of Divine light comprises Muhammad in his light nature: a translucent shaft of light, a primeval man who is, concomitantly, the prototype of mankind. His primordial adoration of God throughout a measureless epoch of time (some Traditions say ten-thousand years, during which time God looked at it seventy-thousand times a day, while others claim the Prophet as a light fourteen-thousand years before the creation of Âdam) represents the original idea and image of the human being, the believing, obedient creature fashioned in Divine light. This concept of the primeval 'Muhammadan Light' is inherently connected with the 'Verse of the Light' (Q. 24: 35):

«Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shine star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither

²⁴⁵ Cf. Bannerth, E. "La Khalwatiyya en Egypte": 15.

²⁴⁶ Abû Hâmid Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Ghazâlî (d. 505/1111).

²⁴⁷ Taqî al-Dîn Ahmad b. al-Halîm b. Taymiyya al-Hanbalî (d. 728/1328).

²⁴⁸ Taqî al-Dîn al-Subkî (d. 756/1355).

²⁴⁹ For an in-depth treatment, cf. Rubin, U. "Nûr Muhammadî": 125.

of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allah guideth to His light whom He will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things.»

A number of the Sûfî masters, notably al-Tustarî,²⁵⁰ developed their theory of the 'Muhammadan Light' from the idea of "the similitude of His light." God, the inaccessible mystery of Divine light articulates Himself in the likeness of the light of Muhammad. The origin of the 'Muhammadan Light' is depicted as a luminous mass of primordial adoration, which takes the shape of a transparent column of Divine light and constitutes Muhammad as the primal articulation of God. In his exegesis, al-Tustarî explains:

"When God willed to created Muhammad, He made appear a light from His light. When it reached the veil of the majesty, it bowed in prostration before God. God created from its prostration a mighty column like crystal glass of light that is outwardly and inwardly translucent."²⁵¹

This 'Muhammadan Light' is, accordingly, a kind of 'primal matter', shaped by God from His own light and from which issues all existence. Muhammad is therefore the primal cosmic origin of mankind, the first creation in pre-existence, enshrining the archetype of all created beings: God caused all the rest of creation to proceed from the 'Muhammadan Light', so that were it not for Muhammad, God would not have created.

But the Sûfî masters were not alone in developing these themes. The Shî'a scholars took up the texts, reworking and reinterpreting them so that, for example, the sixth Imâm, Abû 'Abd Allâh Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sâdiq, in an exegesis of the 'Verse of the Light', envisages Fâtima as the niche and as the shining star (since she is like the radiant star among the women of the world):

²⁵⁰ Sahl b. 'Abd Allâh al-Tustarî (d. 283/896).

²⁵¹ Cf. Böwering, G. *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam*. 149.

“In the words of God, may He be exalted, God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is like a niche, Fâtima, in whom is a lamp, al-Hasan. The lamp is in a glass, al-Husayn. The glass is as a shining star, Fâtima, a shining star among the women of the people of the world, kindled from a blessed tree, Ibrâhîm, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, nor Jewish, nor Christian, whose oil all but glows forth – knowledge all but overflowing from it – though no fire touched it. Light upon light: from it, Imâm after Imâm. God guides to His light those whom He will: God guides to the Imâms those whom He will. God imparts words of wisdom to humankind.”²⁵²

Fâtima’s pre-existence does not therefore imply eternity: she herself is, like her husband, sons and the Imâms who will come after them, created from Muhammad’s own light. They are, in varied Traditions, created by God as “figures of light from My Light” (*ashbâh nûr min nûr*),²⁵³ or “from an origin of light” (*sinkh*),²⁵⁴ or from “one light” (*nûr wâhid*).²⁵⁵ The mystery of this creation is expressed by a Tradition carried by, among others, al-Kulaynî:

“Abû ‘Abd Allâh²⁵⁶ said: God, may He be blessed and exalted, said: Muhammad, I created you and ‘Alî a light, that is, a spirit without a body, before I created My heavens, My earth, My Throne and My

²⁵² KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *al-A’imma nûr Allâh*, n. 5: 595.

²⁵³ TST². vol. I, n. 270: 172; MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 11, n. 61: 361-362; vol. XXXVI, bb. 41, nn. 82, 83: 261; vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 32: 62.

²⁵⁴ MJL. vol. XXVII, bb. 7, n. 67: 199-200; vol. XXXVI, bb. 40, n. 18: 216-217.

²⁵⁵ TFA³. bb. 4, n. 24: 93; AML. vol. II: 141; MJL. vol. XXXVI, bb. 40, n. 21: 222, bb. 41, n. 100: 280.

²⁵⁶ The sixth Imâm.

sea. You did not fail to proclaim Me unique²⁵⁷ and to glorify me. Then I combined your two lights and made them one, which was praising, hallowing and exulting Me. Then I divided it into two, and divided the two into two, and they became four: one Muhammad, one ‘Alî, and two al-Hasan and al-Husayn. Then God created Fâtima from light, beginning as a spirit without a body. Then He anointed us with His right hand and made His light arrive in us.”²⁵⁸

Al-Majlisî records a number of comparable Traditions, some very close to al-Kulaynî’s much earlier one and others somewhat more comprehensive.

Aside from the disputes over the date of her birth, the actual details of Khadîja’s pregnancy and Fâtima’s birth are, with some Sunnî exceptions (notably, al-Tabarî and al-Saffûrî) transmitted almost wholly by Shî‘a transmitters. Three basic strands of Tradition predominate: that Muhammad consumed heavenly fruit, that Fâtima communicated with her mother whilst in the womb and that Khadîja was attended by four heavenly midwives.

“On the authority of ‘Â’isha, that the Prophet, God bless and save him, was often kissing the neck of Fâtima, and I said: Messenger of God, I saw you doing something you never do! He said: Did you not know, Humayrâ²⁵⁹ that God, powerful and lofty, when He caused me to journey to Heaven, ordered Jibrîl who brought me into Paradise and made me stop at a tree. I have never seen one with a better fragrance, or with better fruit. Jibrîl drew near, rubbed it and made me eat, and God, powerful and lofty, created from it sperm in my loins. When I came back to the world I had in-

²⁵⁷ The Arabic verb *ballala* – *yuhallilu* literally means ‘to proclaim the words: There is no god but God’ (*lâ ilâha illâ llâh*).

²⁵⁸ KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *Mawlid al-nabî*, n. 3: 440.

²⁵⁹ A pet name used by Muhammad for ‘Â’isha.

tercourse with Khadīja and she became pregnant with Fâtima.”²⁶⁰

According to this Tradition, transmitted by only a handful of Shī’a and Sunnī scholars, Muhammad, in the course of his ‘night journey’ (*isrā’*) was given heavenly fruit to eat by Jibrīl, and upon his return had intercourse with Khadīja, who conceived Fâtima ostensibly as a result of the heavenly fruit which had become sperm in Muhammad’s loins. The Sunnī scholars who transmit this Tradition are not unconcerned by the problems it causes for dating Fâtima’s birth. Al-‘Asqalânî and al-Haythamî, as noted previously, reject the Tradition, calling it absolutely false and adding that its impossibility lies in the fact that Fâtima was born before the ‘night journey’. Curiously, their rejection touches only implicitly upon the actual subject of the fruit. Al-Shablanjî notes that not all accept this Tradition, again because of the dating of the ‘night journey’. Al-Jawzî and al-Khawârizmî also carry an alternative version of the Tradition, which place the eating of the heavenly fruit not during the ‘night journey’ but during a private visit to Muhammad by Jibrīl:

“Jibrīl the Faithful Spirit²⁶¹ descended to me with a cluster of fruit picked from Paradise, and I ate and had intercourse with Khadīja and Fâtima was born.”²⁶²

²⁶⁰ HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4801: 183-184 (with an annotation of rejection by al-Dhahabî in the notes); BGD. vol. V, n. 2481: 87; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 33: 104-105, n. 46: 110-111; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*: 412-413; RHB.: 36, 44-45; SQL². vol. V, n. 541: 160; SFI. vol. II, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 180; SYT. vol. IV, *Sûrat al-isrâ’*: 282; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 202; MTQ. vol. V: 97; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhikr manâqib ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 42. Among the Shī’a, cf. YQB. vol. II: 128; MSD. vol. III, bb. 72, n. 1485: 22-23 and bb. 73, n. 1496: 31.

²⁶¹ Cf. Q. 26: 193.

²⁶² KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 46: 110-111; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*: 412. Cf. also RHB.: 44.

The Sunnî transmitter al-Tabarî begins with the episode of the heavenly fruit, which he appears to situate outside of the context of the 'night journey', and develops his theme to include all the other major strands:

"The Prophet said: Jibrîl brought me an apple from Paradise, and I ate it and I had intercourse with Khadija and she became pregnant with Fâtima."²⁶³

The concept of the mystical fruit is intimately bound up with the notion of Fâtima's pre-existent light and with the concept that she is a 'maiden of Paradise in human form' (*banrâ' insîyya*). This three-fold correlation is clearly seen in a lengthy Tradition relayed by al-Sadûq, which comprises in one text various elements that we have already seen or will see concerning Fâtima's origins and status:

"The Messenger of God said: the light of Fâtima was created before the earth and the heaven were shaped. Some of the people said: Prophet of God, so she is not human? He said: Fâtima is a maiden of Paradise in human form. Someone said: Prophet of God, how is she a maiden of Paradise in human form? He said: God, powerful and lofty, created her from His light before He created Âdam or there were spirits. When God, powerful and lofty, created Âdam, she was displayed to Âdam. It was said: Prophet of God, where was Fâtima? He said: She was in a hollow under the leg of the Throne. They said: Prophet of God, what was her food? He said: The glorification, acclamation and praise of God. When God, powerful and lofty, created Âdam and drew me from his loins, it pleased God, powerful and lofty, to draw her from my loins. He placed her in an apple in Paradise, and Jibra'îl came to me bearing it, and said to me: Peace be upon you, and the mercy of God and

²⁶³ RHB.: 44-45.

His blessings, Muhammad. I said: And peace be upon you, and the mercy of God, my beloved Jibra'îl. He said: Muhammad, your Lord greets you with peace. I said: Peace comes from Him and peace returns to Him. He said: Muhammad, this is an apple. God, powerful and lofty, gives it to you as a present from Paradise. I took it and pressed it to my breast. He said: Muhammad, God, lofty His splendor, says: Eat it. I split it open, and saw a brilliant light, and was frightened by it. He said: Muhammad, why are you not eating it entirely? Do not fear! That light is *al-Mansûra* in Heaven, and on earth she is Fâtima. I said: My beloved Jibra'îl, why is she called *al-Mansûra* in Heaven and Fâtima on earth? He said: She is called Fâtima on earth because she has separated her adherents (*shî'a*) from the Fire, and she has separated her enemies from her love, and in Heaven she is called *al-Mansûra*, for this is the speech of God, powerful and lofty, «*and in that day believers will rejoice in Allah's help to victory. He helpeth to victory whom He will*»,²⁶⁴ that is, the help of Fâtima for her loved ones.”²⁶⁵

This Tradition not only places the eating of the mystical fruit outside of the ‘night journey’, but it also encapsulates in one text numerous strands spread throughout the Shî'a corpus. The concept of a pregnancy resulting from the eating of fruit is foreign to the Christian and Jewish texts, in which fruit, and specifically the fruit of the ‘tree of knowledge’ recorded in the book of Genesis,²⁶⁶ is principally to be understood in an analogical sense: the only parallel that might be drawn is that, just as Fâtima's conception by means of a fruit from Paradise made her otherworldly, a ‘maiden of Paradise in human form’, so too the temptation proffered by Satan to Adam and Eve in the garden was that eating the obviously distinct

²⁶⁴ Cf. Q. 30: 4-5.

²⁶⁵ SDQ⁶, n. 53: 396. Cf. also MJL, vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 3: 4; bb. 2, n. 17: 18.

²⁶⁶ Gen. 2: 16-17, 3: 2-7.

fruit of the tree of knowledge would make them godlike, raising them above the status of ordinary humanity. But such stories of pregnancy resulting from mystical fruit are not unknown in the realm of mythology. In Incan mythology, the virgin goddess Cavillaca (or Cavillace) ate fruit which was in fact the sperm of the moon-god Coniraya, and thereby became pregnant (without sexual intercourse). Phrygian (Anatolian) mythology tells that Nana, daughter of the god of the river Sangarius, fell pregnant with Attis after placing in her lap (or on her breast) the fruit of an almond tree, generated by the blood of the androgynous Agdistis, the Phrygian mother-goddess.²⁶⁷ What differentiates the case of Fâtima's birth from the myths is that it was primarily Muhammad, the father of the child, rather than Khadija, the mother, who ate the mystical fruit (although some of the Traditions insist that both of them ate of the fruit offered by Jibrîl): nor is there any refutation of normative sexual intercourse taking place, a factor precisely missing from the texts of mythology.

The Tradition of Fâtima talking to her mother from within the womb is carried by surprisingly few Shî'a transmitters. Al-Tabarî takes up the theme in a continuation of the Tradition quoted above, with Khadija speaking:

"She said: I had a light pregnancy, and whenever I went out the one in my womb spoke with me."²⁶⁸

The version offered by al-Majlisî is more detailed but, like al-Tabarî, he binds together in one Tradition all the major themes:

"I said to Abû 'Abd Allâh Ja'far b. Muhammad:²⁶⁹ What was the birth of Fâtima like? He said: When the Messenger of God married Khadija, may God be pleased with her, the women of Mecca disassociated from her, and did not visit her or greet her, and did not let a woman visit her. Khadija felt

²⁶⁷ Price, S. and Kearns, E, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Mythology*: 12, 75.

²⁶⁸ RHB.: 44-45. Cf. also RTB¹.: 8; SDQ¹. n. 1: 593; FNR. vol. I: 143; RWD¹. vol. II: 524, vol. III: 1051; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 1: 2.

²⁶⁹ The sixth Imâm.

lonely on account of this, and when she was pregnant with Fâtima, Fâtima began to talk with her from her womb, and to make her patient. Khadîja used to hide this from the Messenger of God and one day he visited and heard Khadîja talking to Fâtima, and he said to her: Khadîja, who is talking to you? She said: The fetus which is in my womb is talking to me and keeping me company. He said to her: Jibrâ'il announced this to me: that she is a female, and that she is a pure and auspicious person, and that God, may He be blessed and exalted, will bring about my progeny from her, and He will bring about from her progeny Imâms in the community, whom He will make leaders on His earth after the termination of His revelation."²⁷⁰

The declaration of a form of annunciation of a child to Muhammad is almost secreted within this Tradition, obscured by the emphasis upon the fetus which speaks from the womb. The annunciation by Jibrîl, which follows some of the strands of the Biblical pattern by highlighting especially the noble character and future of the child to be born, is starkly different in one major element: it is an annunciation made not to the mother of the child, but to the father. The curiosity of this particular Tradition is that while Khadîja attempts to hide from her husband that her unborn child is communicating to her, Muhammad for his part seems not to have relayed to her the news of this annunciation at the moment it occurred: its occurrence arises almost secondarily in the course of a dialogue between husband and wife.

Al-Tabarî then introduces a third strand into his Tradition:

"When she wanted to give birth, she sent to the women of the Quraysh to come to her and take charge over her in the way women take charge over those are giving birth. They would not do it

²⁷⁰ RTB¹: 8; SDQ¹. n. 1: 593; FNR. vol. I: 143; RWD¹. vol. II: 524; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ'*: 388; MJL. vol. XII, bb. 5: 80, vol. XVI, bb. 5: 80-81.

and said: We will not help you, since you became the husband of Muhammad. While she was in this situation, there came to her four women, arrayed in beauty and light which cannot be described. One of them said to her: I am your mother Hawwâ'. Another said: I am Âsiya, daughter of Muzâhim. Another said: I am Kulthûm, sister of Mûsâ. And another said: I am Maryam, daughter of 'Imrân, mother of 'Îsâ. We have come to take charge over you in your need..."²⁷¹

Al-Majlisî takes up the same theme, but with a change in the names of the visitors:

"Khadija, may God be pleased with her, continued in this way until her delivery came. She sent to the women of the Quraysh and the women of the Banû Hâshim to come and take charge over her in the way women take charge over women (giving birth). They sent to her: You have defied us and did not hear our words, and you married Muhammad, the poor and penniless orphan of Abû Tâlib. We will not come and we will not take charge over your situation at all. Khadija was greatly distressed by this. While this was happening, there came to her four women, tall, as though they were of the women of the Banû Hâshim, and she was afraid of them. One of them said to her: Khadija, do not be sad. We are messengers of your Lord to you, and we are your sisters. I am Sâra, and this is Âsiya, daughter of Muzâhim, and she is your slave in Paradise; and this is Maryam, daughter of 'Imrân, and this is Safrâ', daughter of Shu'ayb. God, may He be exalted, sent us to you

²⁷¹ RHB.: 45. Cf. also RTB¹.: 8; SDQ¹. n. 1: 593; FNR. vol. I: 143; RWD¹. vol. II: 524, vol. III: 1051; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 388.

to take charge over your need, in the way women help women.”²⁷²

In another report of the same Tradition, al-Majlisî names the four heavenly midwives as Sâra, Âsiya, Maryam, and Kulthûm, sister of Mûsâ.²⁷³

These Traditions raise a number of noteworthy points and questions. While Âsiya is described, as are the others, as a ‘sister’ to Khadija, her status in Paradise is more specifically defined as being that of Khadija’s slave (*raqîqa*), suggesting that she is not, together with Khadija, Maryam and Fâtima, one of the mistresses of the women of that place. Maryam’s status too in the Tradition is quite obviously one of subservience, for she comes as a messenger and a helper. This deference to Fâtima, even while she is still in the womb, will be repeated at the end of her life when, in Fâtima’s final illness, Maryam comes to nurse her.²⁷⁴

The band of heavenly visitors is curious: all of them, although unnamed in the text of the Qur’ân (with the exception of Maryam), are intimately connected with personalities found there. Sâra is the wife of Ibrâhîm who, insists Q. 2: 135, was neither Jew nor Christian, but an upright man (*hanîf*). Kulthûm is named as the sister of Mûsâ, while Safrâ’ is the daughter of Shu’ayb, the messenger to the people of Midian named in Q. 7: 85; 11: 84; 26: 177; 29: 36, and who is sometimes identified with Jethro of the Old Testament.²⁷⁵ We have already come across Âsiya the daughter of Muzâhim and wife of Pharaoh (Q. 66: 11). While al-Tabarî clearly names Maryam both as the daughter of ‘Imrân and as the mother of ‘Îsâ, in al-Majlisî the reference to ‘Îsâ is omitted.

Fâtima’s speaking in the womb and, as we shall see, her making the testimony of faith at the moment of her birth, do not present clear-cut equivalents in other traditions or texts (unless one conjectures a parallel with John the Baptist leaping for joy in his

²⁷² MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 5: 80-81.

²⁷³ Op. cit. vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 1: 2.

²⁷⁴ “Then her ailment started and she grew ill, and God, powerful and lofty, sent to her Maryam bt. ‘Imrân, to nurse her and keep her company in her illness...” Cf. RTB²: 199; SDQ¹. n. 2: 112; MJL. vol. XIV, bb. 16, n. 22: 205, vol. XXVIII, bb. 2: 39, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 13: 172.

²⁷⁵ Jethro, father-in-law of Moses: cf. Ex. 3: 1, 4: 18.

mother's womb).²⁷⁶ Of ʿĪsâ, the Qurʾân proclaims that «*He will speak unto mankind in his cradle...*» (Q. 3: 46), which he does, notwithstanding a protest from Maryam's relations that such a thing could not happen (Q. 19: 29-30). Quite possibly, although the text is not clear, it is also the newborn ʿĪsâ who speaks to console his mother in the pangs of childbirth: if it is him, then he speaks to her either from the womb or immediately after his birth (Q. 19: 23-24). But Fâtima's case supersedes all of these occurrences, since she speaks as an unborn fetus in the womb of Khadija.

Finally, al-Tabarî notes a detail of the actual moment of birth:

“And she said: Fâtima was born, and when she fell to the earth she fell prostrating, extending her finger.”²⁷⁷

Al-Majlisî offers a little more detail:

“One of them sat on her right and the other on her left, and the third in front of her and the fourth behind her, and Khadija gave birth to Fâtima, pure, immaculate: and when she fell to the earth, a light radiated from her, so that it entered the houses of Mecca, and there did not remain a place in the east of the world or in its west in which that light did not shine. The woman who was in front of her received her and washed her with the water of *al-Kawthar*, and brought out two cloths, whiter than milk and more fragrant than musk and ambergris, and wrapped her with the one and veiled her with the other. Then she questioned her, and Fâtima uttered the *shahâda*, ‘that there is no god but God and that my father is the Messenger of God, master of the prophets, and that ʿAlî is the master of those entrusted, and that

²⁷⁶ Lk. 1: 41, 44.

²⁷⁷ RHB.: 45. The extension of the finger signifies, in Islam, that there is only one God.

my first offspring is master of the tribes.²⁷⁸ Then she greeted them and addressed each one of them by her name and they smiled at her. The maidens of Paradise rejoiced, and the people of Paradise spread the good news to one another about the birth of Fâtima.”²⁷⁹

Texts such as these, with all their symbolic gestures and rites, must be read for the religious significance they impart to the adherents of a particular faith. Fâtima the newborn infant is washed in water from Paradise and clothed in its fragrant garments by residents of Paradise who are patently subservient to her. In a sense, the Tradition serves to highlight certain theological points (that she is born pure and sinless, with a nature (*fiṭra*) that is wholly Islamic as intended by God for all humanity, and that ‘Alī’s claims are justified by Heaven) as well as a portent of the future, when Fâtima will be clothed in the glory of Paradise, gathered at the pool of *al-Kawthar* where her husband ‘Alī will stand as judge. The stylistic language serves a didactic purpose, and for this the Tradition must be accepted.

“Abū ‘Abd Allāh²⁸⁰ said: Fâtima has nine names with God, powerful and lofty: Fâtima, the Righteous (*al-Siddīqa*), the Blessed (*al-Mubâraka*), the Pure (*al-Tâhira*), the Chaste (*al-Zakīyya*), the Satisfied (*al-Râdiyya*), She who satisfies God (*al-Mardīyya*), the Converser [with angels] (*al-Muhadditha*) and the Radiant (*al-Zahrâ*).”²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ The grammar here suggests that only one son is being spoken of. In another version of this Tradition carried by al-Majlisî, ‘sons’ is in the plural form, suggesting more than the customary two (al-Hasan and al-Husayn).

²⁷⁹ RTB¹: 8; SDQ¹. n. 1: 598; FNR. vol. I: 143; RWD¹. vol. II: 524; MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 5: 80-81, vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 1: 3.

²⁸⁰ The sixth Imâm.

²⁸¹ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 1: 10-11. Cf. also: RTB¹: 10; SDQ¹. n. 18: 592; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 3: 414; FNR. vol. I: 148; TBR¹: 148; IRB. vol. I: 463.

Three things are at once striking about this catalogue of names. The first is that two crucial Arabic names are missing: those of *al-Batûl* and *al-‘Adhrâ’* (both rendered as ‘the Virgin’), a title ascribed to Fâtima in numerous Traditions. The second is that al-Majlisî carries another Tradition, from Abû Ja‘far al-Qummî, in which no less than twenty-three names are attributed to Fâtima, although these are not qualified as her names ‘with God’. A third point of note is that throughout the texts of Traditions, there are numerous other names attributed to Fâtima, not all of which are found in al-Majlisî’s ostensibly official lists. Al-Mûsawî in the first volume of his *al-Kawthar* provides a long list of Fâtima’s names, some of which he categorizes as her *kunya* (pl. *kunâ*) and others as her *laqab* (pl. *alqâb*).²⁸² He is transmitting primarily from four works: al-Majlisî in his *Bihâr al-anwâr*, al-Bahrânî in his *‘Awâlim al-‘ulûm*, al-Muhallâtî²⁸³ in his *Rayâhîn al-shar‘a* and al-Fayrûzâbâdî in his *Fadâ’il al-khamsa min al-sibâh al-sitta*. These lists comprise the best-known names, and many others hardly known – al-Fayrûzâbâdî claims that there are close to one-hundred-and-forty-five names among her *alqâb* alone. Each of the names tells something of her history, or of her status, or of the mystical motifs that surround her. Sometimes, confusingly, the same name is found listed as a *kunya* and as a *laqab*, while others lose much of their succinctness in translation.

Each of her names encapsulates a distinct theology and Tradition, delineating specific virtues and a precise status for Fâtima. Noteworthy too in all the Traditions about the names of Fâtima is the prominence given to physical purity and chastity:

“Her names are Mother of al-Hasan, Mother of al-Husayn, Mother of al-Muhassin and Mother of her father. Her names, as cited by Abû Ja‘far al-Qummî, are: Fâtima, the Virgin (*al-Batûl*), the Inviolable (*al-Hasân*), the Free (*al-Hurra*), the Mistress (*al-Sayyida*), the Virgin (*al-‘Adhrâ’*), the Radi-

²⁸² The *laqab* can be simple or composite, and is a qualifying term, indicating a moral quality, or a special merit attached to the bearer, or an honorific title, or the fact of his or her belonging to a particular sect or group, or even a physical peculiarity.

²⁸³ *Shaykh* Dhahîb Allâh al-Muhallâtî. Neither his name nor his works are recorded by Brockelmann.

ant (*al-Zabrâ*), the Maiden of Paradise (*al-Hawrâ*),²⁸⁴ the Blessed (*al-Mubâraka*), the Pure (*al-Tâhira*), the Chaste (*al-Zakiyya*), the Satisfied (*al-Râdiya*), She who satisfies God (*al-Mardiyya*), the Converser [with angels] (*al-Muhaddatha*), the Greatest Maryam (*Maryam al-Kubrâ*), the Most righteous (*al-Siddîqa al-Kubrâ*): and it is said in Heaven, the Heavenly luminary (*al-Nûriyya al-samâwiyya*) and the Affectionate (*al-Hâniyya*).”²⁸⁵

Transmitting from the *Tafsîr Furât b. Ibrâhîm al-Kûfî* and from al-Sadûq’s *Ma’âni al-akbbâr*, al-Majlisî reports that ‘Fâtima’ is the earthly name of Muhammad’s daughter, while in Heaven she is known as al-Mansûra (the one aided by God):

“I said: My beloved Jibra’îl, why is she called *al-Mansûra* in Heaven and Fâtima on earth? He said: She is called Fâtima on earth because she has separated her adherents (*shî’a*) from the Fire, and her enemies have been separated from her love, and in Heaven she is called *al-Mansûra*, for this is the word of God, powerful and lofty, «and in that day believers will rejoice in Allah’s help to victory. He helpeth to victory whom He will»,²⁸⁶ that is, the help of Fâtima for her loved ones.”²⁸⁷

The name ‘Fâtima’ is, accordingly, a wordplay on the Arabic root f-t-m, with its primary meaning ‘to wean’. The concept of the Prophet’s daughter as one who has been weaned by God and as one by whom God weans others is expressed by numerous Traditions, and although most of these have diverse wording, the wordplay constituting the central element remains the same. Al-Majlisî records this Tradition from al-Sadûq’s *‘Uyûn akbbâr al-Ridâ*:

²⁸⁴ Literally, one possessing eyes that have a marked contrast between black and white.

²⁸⁵ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 15: 16-17.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Q. 30: 4-5.

²⁸⁷ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 3: 4; bb. 2, n. 17: 18. Cf. SDQ⁶. n. 53: 396.

“The Messenger of God said: I called my daughter Fâtima because God, powerful and lofty, has separated her and separated those who love her from the Fire.”²⁸⁸

Transmitting from al-Sadûq’s *‘Ilal al-sharâ’i’*, al-Majlisî notes that the concept of being weaned means ‘to be separated’.²⁸⁹ In this sense, the texts delineate a four-fold separation for Fâtima by God: she is separated from the Fire,²⁹⁰ from evil²⁹¹ (suggesting that her purification, at the very least, took place in the womb), from polytheism (*shirk*)²⁹² and from menstruation.²⁹³ In addition, the texts use the root f-t-m in the sense of ‘to wean’, in that God has ‘weaned’ Fâtima with knowledge:

“I weaned you with knowledge, that is, I suckled you with knowledge until you had no more need and were weaned: or, I weaned you from ignorance by means of knowledge: or, I brought about

²⁸⁸ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 4: 12. Cf. SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 174: 46. Among the Sunnî, cf. HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, nn. 4788, 4789: 178-179, n. 4792: 180; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 2: 90; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî dhikr tazwîj Fâtima bi-‘Alî*, : 421; RHB.: 26; SFI. vol. II, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*,: 179; MTQ. vol. V: 97; ISM. vol. 1, bb. 5: 425; SHL. bb. *Fadl fî dhikr manâqib ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*; 43.

²⁸⁹ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 7: 13. Cf. SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 2: 178.

²⁹⁰ RTB¹.: 15; SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 336: 72; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, nn. 5-6: 179; TFA². bb. 22, n. 5-1179: 570; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 377; IRB. vol. I: 463; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, nn. 3-4: 12, n. 10: 14, nn. 12, 14: 15, nn. 17-18: 18-19.

²⁹¹ SDQ¹. n. 18: 592; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 3: 414; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 3: 178; FNR. vol. I: 148; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 377-378; IRB. vol. I: 463; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 1: 10, n. 14: 15-16.

²⁹² RTB¹.: 10.

²⁹³ KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *Mawlid al-Zabrâ’ Fâtima*, n. 6: 460; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 4: 179; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 378; IRB. vol. I: 463; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 9: 14-15, n. 14: 15-16.

your weaning with milk combined with knowledge..."²⁹⁴

The texts also demarcate four recipients of this separation from the Fire: her followers (*shī'a*),²⁹⁵ those who love her,²⁹⁶ her offspring²⁹⁷ and those who support her and her offspring.²⁹⁸

The separation of Fâtima's offspring from the Fire is intimately connected to a Tradition that is more profuse both in Sunnî and Shī'a sources: that Fâtima has guarded her chastity, and because of this, God has saved her offspring from the Fire. Although the question of Fâtima's chastity will be examined later, this Tradition merits a place here: "Fâtima has guarded her chastity and God has forbidden her offspring to the Fire."²⁹⁹

Thus, while her name indicates the fact of the weaning or separation, it is her chaste lifestyle that becomes the *raison d'être* for the salvation of her progeny. A number of texts identify these off-

²⁹⁴ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 9: 13.

²⁹⁵ RTB¹: 53; SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 336: 72; SDQ⁶. n. 53: 396; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 5: 179; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Fî manzîlati-hâ*: 377-378; IRB. vol. I: 463; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 3: 4, bb. 2, n. 3: 12, n. 10: 14, n. 14: 15, n. 17: 18, vol. LXV, bb. 15, n. 135: 76. Cf. also FRT. n. 435: 321.

²⁹⁶ RTB²: 123, 131, 184; SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 174: 46; SDQ⁶. n. 14: 64; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 1: 178; TFA¹. vol. III: 98; TFA². bb. 11, n. 18-571: 294; TBR¹: 148; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 377; TST³: 182; IRB. vol. I: 463; HLL²: 352; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 4: 12, n. 8: 13, n. 12: 15, n. 14: 16, vol. LXV, bb. 18, n. 66: 133, vol. XCV, bb. 7: 139. Cf. also DAY. vol. II: 232.

²⁹⁷ RTB¹: 53; TFA². bb. 22, n. 5-1179: 570; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 18: 18-19.

²⁹⁸ SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 6: 179; IRB. vol. I: 463; MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 57: 50, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 11: 14.

²⁹⁹ SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 264: 63, bb. 58, n. 1: 232; SDQ⁶. nn. 1-6: 105-106; RWD¹. vol. I: 281; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 373; IRB. vol. I: 468, vol. II: 144, 310, 346; HLL²: 351; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 6: 20, bb. 9, n. 2: 230, nn. 3-6: 231, n. 7: 232, vol. XLVI, bb. 11, n. 51: 185, vol. XLVIII: 315, vol. XLIX, bb. 16, nn. 2-3: 217, vol. LXXV, bb. 16, n. 52: 78, vol. XCIII, bb. 27, nn. 14-18: 221-223. Among the Sunnî, cf. HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4789: 179; ISH. vol. IV, bb. 268, n. 5277: 209; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 9: 94; RTB¹: 48; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 202; MTQ. vol. V: 97.

spring as al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Zaynab and Umm Kulthûm.³⁰⁰ There are two more recipients of the act of weaning or separation and connected to the name of Fâtima: her offspring have been separated from greed³⁰¹ and her enemies have been separated from her love with a separation that will be most clearly seen in Fâtima's actions on the Day of Judgment.³⁰²

The name 'Fâtima' is written on the gate of Paradise and on the leg of the Throne and is seen there by Âdam³⁰³ as well as by Muhammad during his 'night journey'.³⁰⁴ In a further, well-attested transmission, it is reported that 'Fâtima' is among the words which Âdam received from his Lord, based upon Q. 2: 37 – *«Then Adam received from His Lord words (of revelation) and He relented toward him»* – and by which he repents.³⁰⁵ It is also noted that 'Fâtima' is among

³⁰⁰ IRB. vol. I: 468 (inexplicably, this text mentions al-Hasan, al-Husayn and Umm Kulthûm, but omits Zaynab); MJL. XLIII, bb. 9, n. 4: 231, vol. XLIX, bb. 16, n. 3: 218, vol. XCIII, bb. 27, n. 16: 223.

³⁰¹ SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 2: 178; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 7: 13.

³⁰² SDQ⁶. n. 53: 396; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 3: 4, bb. 2, n. 17: 18. Cf. also FRT. n. 435: 321.

³⁰³ SDQ⁵. vol. I, bb. 28, 67: 62; SDQ⁶. n. 1: 124; RWD³. bb. 3, n. 11: 45; ABD.: 49; MJL. vol. XI, bb. 3: 157, n. 9: 164, vol. XVI, bb. 11, n. 62: 362, vol. XXVI, bb. 7, n. 6: 324, vol. XXVII, bb. 10, n. 11: 6. Cf. also JQM.: 128. It must be admitted that the Shî'a transmit a number of Traditions in which Âdam sees written only the names of Muhammad and 'Alî. Cf. RWD³. bb. 4, n. 26: 51; HLL². bb. 42: 190, b. 74: 234; MJL. vol. XI, bb. 3, n. 34: 181, vol. XXVI, bb. 7, n. 6: 324, vol. XXVII, bb. 10, n. 15: 7; NTR. vol. V, bb. 35, n. 14-5770: 237.

³⁰⁴ TFA². bb. 12, n. 77-737: 355; FNR. vol. I: 83; TST². vol. I, n. 65: 64; IRB. vol. I: 94, 526; HLL².: 459; MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 23, n. 167: 191; vol. XXVII, bb. 10, nn. 6, 8: 3-4, n. 30: 228, vol. XXXVI, bb. 41, n. 191: 331, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 41: 76, n. 59: 95, n. 64: 97, vol. XLIII, bb. 12: 303. Cf. also JQM.: 83; DAY. vol. II: 234.

³⁰⁵ SDQ¹. n. 2: 75, n. 7: 250; SDQ². vol. II, bb. 33, n. 57: 358; SDQ⁴. vol. I, n. 8: 270, n. 84: 304; SDQ⁶. nn. 1-2: 125; AYY. vol. I, bb. 2, n. 27: 41; FNR. vol. I: 157; RWD³. bb. 4, n. 26: 51, bb. 5, n. 31: 54; SHB. vol. I, bb. *Fî al-âyat al-munzala*: 345; BTQ. n. 745: 379; TST². vol. I, n. 166: 112; IRB. vol. I: 465; HLL¹.: 179; HLL².: 14; ABD.: 76, 82; HRR¹. vol. VII, bb. 37, nn. 8843-8845: 98-99, n. 8847: 100; MJL. vol. XI, bb. 3, n. 20: 175, n. 22-24: 176-177, n. 34: 181, vol. XII, bb. 3, n. 12: 66, bb. 9, n. 23: 260, vol. XVIII, bb. 9, n. 1: 83, vol. XXIV, bb. 50, n. 21: 183, vol. XXVI, bb. 7, nn. 3-6, 9: 323-324, n. 15: 333, vol. XXVII, bb. 11, n. 1: 13, vol. XXXII, bb.

the words with which Ibrâhîm was tested by his Lord, based upon Q. 2: 124 – «*And (remember) when his Lord tried Abraham with (His) command...*».³⁰⁶ Finally, a handful of Traditions posit that the name of Fâtima is written in the *Tawrât*, in a narrative that is worth examining. Al-Majlisî is transmitting from al-Sadûq:

“A person of the Jews came to the Messenger of God...and said: Inform me of five things written in the *Tawrât*...the Prophet said: The first thing written in the *Tawrât* is ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of God’, and in Hebrew this is Good. Then the Messenger of God recited this verse: «*whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel (which are) with them...and bringeth good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is the Praised One*». In the second line is the name of my entrusted, ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib, in the third and fourth my grandsons al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and in the fifth line their mother, Fâtima, mistress of the women of the worlds. In the *Tawrât*, the name of my entrusted is Iliyyâ,³⁰⁷ the names of my grandsons are Shabbar and Shabbîr,³⁰⁸ and they are the lights of Fâtima.

34, n. 3: 56, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 36: 65, vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 44: 245, vol. LX, bb. 2, n. 36: 80, vol. XCI, bb. 28, n. 15: 20; NTR. vol. V, bb. 35, nn. 8-5764, 9-5765: 232, nn. 14-5770, 15-5771: 237-238. Cf. also DAY. vol. II: 210, 421.

³⁰⁶ In Q. 2: 37, Pickthall renders the Arabic *kalimât* as ‘words’: in Q. 2: 124 he translates the same word as ‘commands’. The thrust of these Traditions is that Âdam and Ibrâhîm received the same words from God. Cf. SDQ². vol. II, bb. 33, n. 57: 358; SDQ⁴. vol. I, n. 84: 304; SDQ⁶. n. 1: 126; SHB. vol. I, bb. *Fî al-â'yât al-munẓala*: 345; ABD.: 82; HRR¹. vol. VII, bb. 37, n. 8844: 99; MJL. vol. XI, bb. 3, n. 24: 177, vol. XII, bb. 3, n. 12: 66, vol. XXIV, bb. 50, n. 8: 177; vol. XXVI, bb. 7, n. 3: 323; Cf. also DAY. vol. II: 421.

³⁰⁷ In some texts written Îliyyâ, and in Old Testament usage used for the prophet Elijah.

³⁰⁸ In Islamic tradition, the names of the sons of Hârûn.

The Jew said: You have spoken the truth, Muhammad.”³⁰⁹

Two things are conspicuous in this narrative. The first is that the Tradition mixes two different Qur’anic verses, the first part of Q. 7: 157 and most of Q. 61: 6, so that someone unused to the Qur’ân would think them to be one verse.³¹⁰ The second is that, of the ‘holy five’, only Fâtima does not receive another name: instead, she is qualified by her epithet ‘mistress of the women of the worlds’.

In the case of Fâtima, the appellation *al-Zahrâ*’ (the Radiant) is directly connected with the themes of light that suffuse her story. Some descriptions of her conception augment the accounts, with depictions of light emanating from God to Muhammad and then to Fâtima and ‘Alî. Al-Majlisî portrays the light that flowed daily from Fâtima as she stood in prayer: white at dawn, yellow at noon, red in the evening. This light passed from her to her sons and then to the other Imâms. In a lengthy Tradition, which he transmits from al-Sadûq’s *‘Ilal al-sharâ’i*, al-Majlisî offers an explanation for this appellation, so routinely attached to the name of Fâtima:

“I said to Abû ‘Abd Allâh:³¹¹ Son of the Messenger of God, why was *al-Zahrâ*’ named ‘radiant’ (*ẓahrâ*)? He said: Because three times in the day she shone with light on the commander of the faithful. The light of her face was shining in the morning prayer and on the people in their beds: the whiteness of that light entered their rooms in Medina and whitened their walls. They were astonished at this, and they came to the Prophet and

³⁰⁹ SDQ¹: 191; MFD²: 37; MJL. vol. IX, bb. 2: 298, vol. XIII, bb. 11, n. 11: 331, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 4: 36.

³¹⁰ The first part of Q. 7: 157 reads: «*Those who follow the messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel (which are) with them...*». Q. 61: 6 reads: «*And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is the Praised One...*».

³¹¹ The sixth Imâm.

asked him about what they had seen. He sent them to the house of Fâtima. They came to her house, and saw her sitting in her prayer niche, praying. The light of her face spread from her prayer niche, and they understood that what they had seen was from the light of Fâtima. When the day reached its zenith and she lined up for the prayer, the light of her face shone with a yellow color, and the yellowness entered the rooms of the people and yellowed their walls and their complexion. They came to the Prophet and asked him about what they had seen, and he sent them to the house of Fâtima. They saw her standing in her prayer niche, and the light of her face – the blessings of God be upon her, and upon her father and husband and children – was shining with yellow. They understood that what they had seen was from the light of her face. At the end of the day, when the sun had set, the face of Fâtima took on a reddish color, and her face radiated with the redness, joyfully and thankfully to God, powerful and lofty. The redness of her face entered the rooms of the people and reddened their walls. They were astonished at this, and they came to the Prophet and asked him about what they had seen, and he sent them to the house of Fâtima. They saw her sitting, praising God and glorifying Him, and they understood that what they had seen was from the light of Fâtima's face. This light did not cease on her face until al-Husayn was born.”³¹²

While only al-Sadûq and al-Majlisî record such detail about the various colors of the light, almost all the Traditions detailing the name *al-Zabrâ'* follow the essential leitmotif of light, already an important part of the narratives of Fâtima's pre-existent state. From

³¹² SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 143, n. 2: 180; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 2: 11-12.

al-Sadûq's *ʿIlal al-sharâʿi*³¹³ and from al-Tûsî's *Misbâh al-anwâr*, al-Majlisî transmits the following:

“Why was Fâtima *al-Zabrâʾ* named ‘radiant’ (*ẓabrâʾ*)? He said: Because God, powerful and lofty, created her from the light of His majesty, and when she radiated she illuminated the heavens and the earth with her light. The vision of the angels was overwhelmed, and the angels fell down before God, prostrating and saying: Our God and Master, what is this light? God revealed to them: This is light from My light. I have lodged it in my heavens and created it from My majesty. I brought it forth from the loins of the Prophet of my prophets, and I have preferred him over all the prophets. I have brought forth from that light Imâms to accomplish My command and guide to My truth, and I have made them My Caliphs in My earth after the termination of My revelation.”

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Fâtima is designated with the title *al-Zabrâʾ* because, creating her from the light of His majesty,³¹⁴ God placed her before the Throne³¹⁵ so that she shone over the whole world,³¹⁶ making the heavens and the earth manifest by her light.³¹⁷ On the day of her birth, a light shone in the heavens, such as the angels had never witnessed prior to that day.³¹⁸ From her light, God brought forth lamps which He suspended like pendants on the Throne: these shone upon the heavens and the earth, which then radiated with

³¹³ SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 143, nn. 1-3: 179; IRB. vol. I: 464; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 5: 12.

³¹⁴ RTB¹: 54; SDQ⁶. n. 16: 64; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâʾ*: 378.

³¹⁵ ABD.: 591; MJL. vol. XXXVI, bb. 37, n. 24: 73. Cf. also JQM.: 128.

³¹⁶ ABD.: 143, 591; MJL. vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 51: 82, vol. XL, bb. 91, n. 81: 43. Cf. also JQM.: 128, DAY. vol. II: 403.

³¹⁷ MJL. vol. XXV, bb. 1, n. 30: 16.

³¹⁸ MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 5: 80.

the light of Fâtima.³¹⁹ When she stood in her prayer niche, the light of Fâtima's face shone on the people of the heavens in the same way that the light of the stars shine on the people of the earth. This same light shone on 'Alî at the beginning of the day like the forenoon sun, and at the end of the day like the luminous moon and the glittering star.³²⁰ In Heaven, Fâtima is possessor of a dome made of ruby: its height in the air stretches for the distance of a year, and it is suspended by the power of the Omnipotent. It has neither strap above it to suspend it nor prop below it to hold it up. It contains one-hundred-thousand doors, each attended by one-thousand angels. The people of Paradise see Fâtima as clearly as each sees the glittering star, gleaming in the horizon of heaven, and they proclaim that she is *al-Zahrâ'*, the radiant one.

The name Fâtima and the appellation *al-Zahrâ'* are the chief names given to the daughter of the Prophet, and receive much attention in the books of Tradition: her other titles, at least twenty-seven in al-Majlisî's 'official' litanies,³²¹ although used consistently throughout the Traditions, are accorded less elucidation. Many of them focus upon the issue of physical and spiritual purity, with a brief clarification offered for 'the Pure' (*al-Tâhira*): Fâtima is called *al-Tâhira* on account of her purity from every uncleanness (*danas*) and obscenity (*rafath*).³²² The text then goes on to insist that she neither menstruated nor shed blood in childbirth, a phenomenon that will be examined later in terms of her virginity. To the title *al-Tâhira*, which Shi'a scholars connect with the so-called *Tathîr* verse (Q. 33: 33), a verse that they hold to be addressed exclusively to Muhammad, 'Alî, Fâtima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, some authors add the derivatives 'the Clean' (*al-Tubra*) and 'the Immaculate' (*al-Mutabbhara*), as well as the name 'the Unstained' (*al-Naqiyya*).³²³ Her purity is further stressed by the use of the titles 'the Chaste' (*al-*

³¹⁹ ABD.: 143; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 16; vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 51; 82. Cf. also DAY. vol. II: 143.

³²⁰ RTB¹.: 54; SDQ⁶. n. 15: 64; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 143, n. 3: 181; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ'*: 378; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 6: 11-12, n. 14: 15-16.

³²¹ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 1: 10-11, n. 15: 16-17.

³²² MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 20: 19.

³²³ QQM. n. 2: 309; SDQ³. vol. II, n. 3210: 602; SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 68, n. 1: 267.

Zakīyya),³²⁴ ‘the Inviolable’ (*al-Hasân*)³²⁵ and ‘the Virgin’ (*al-‘Adhrâ*),³²⁶ a designation expressed more frequently by the use of the term *al-Batûl* and which will be examined in more detail in a later chapter.

It is not Fâtima alone who is given the epithet *al-Muhaddatha*: a reference to one who converses with angels, it is also used of Maryam (cf. for example Q. 3: 42-43, 45-46), who converses not merely with angels, but also with Jibrîl himself (Q. 19: 18-22), of Sâra, wife of Ibrâhîm (Q. 11: 71-73) and by some scholars of the mother of Mûsâ (Q. 28: 7). Fâtima is declared to be *muhaddatha*:³²⁷ she is given this title, writes al-Majlisî, because the angels descended from Heaven and proclaimed to her, as they had proclaimed to Maryam daughter of ‘Imrân:

“And when the angels said: Fâtima! «*Lo! Allah hath chosen thee and made thee pure, and hath preferred thee above (all) the women of creations*»”³²⁸

³²⁴ For examples of this title, cf. RTB¹.: 10; RTB².: 12; QQM. n. 17: 230, n. 2: 309; SDQ¹. n. 18: 592; SDQ³. vol. II: 572, n. 3210: 602; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 3: 414; SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 68, n. I: 267; SDQ⁶. n. 9: 58; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 3: 178; TFA¹. vol. VI, bb. 3, n. 12: 10; FNR. vol. I: 148; TBR¹.: 148; RWD¹. vol. II: 542; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ*: 406; IRB. vol. I: 30, 463; HIL². bb. 121: 318; AML. vol. I: 172, vol. III: 77; KFM².: 303; MJL. vol. XXXIII, bb. 14, n. 392: 47, bb. 20, n. 547: 282, vol. XXXV, bb. 2, n. 1: 45, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 1: 10, n. 15: 16, vol. XLV, bb. 44: 276, vol. XCVI, bb. 30, n. 1: 74, vol. XCVII, bb. 5, n. 12: 195, n. 15: 197, n. 20: 199, vol. XCVIII, bb. 18: 179, vol. XCIX, bb. 5, n. 1: 44, bb. 8: 198. Cf. also JQM.: 82.

³²⁵ SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ*: 406; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 15: 16.

³²⁶ SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ*: 406; KFM².: 335; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 15: 16, vol. XLVI, bb. 5: 259, vol. XCVII, bb. 129: 383.

³²⁷ QHL.: 821; MFD².: 329; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ*: 384; IRB. vol. I: 468; MJL. vol. XXX, bb. 19: 132, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 48: 55, n. 66: 79.

³²⁸ RTB¹.: 10, 56; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 146, nn. 1-2: 182; MJL. vol. XIV, bb. 16, n. 23: 206, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 65: 78.

This is a remarkable Tradition, which takes a direct quotation from Q. 3: 42, but removes the name Maryam and replaces it with Fâtima: an unavoidable necessity if the transmitters are to maintain their argument that at the very least, Fâtima is equal to Maryam. Other texts are then used to demonstrate that Fâtima is in fact superior. Part of the Shî'a reasoning would be that Fâtima would have to have been a *muhaddatha*, for if not, Maryam, Sâra and the wife of Mûsâ would rank above her. In fact, the texts surrounding Fâtima's birth, with the appearance of the heavenly women whose number includes Sâra and Maryam in a position subservient to Fâtima, serve to illustrate her superiority.

The title 'She who satisfies God' (*al-Mardiyya*) is also linked by the transmitters to a Qur'anic verse: «*But ah! thou soul at peace! Return unto thy Lord, content in His good pleasure*» (Q. 89: 27-28). The Traditions posit that this verse, like Q. 33: 33, was addressed to Muhammad and the 'people of the house', making Fâtima both *al-Mardiyya* (She who satisfies God) and *al-Râdiyya* (She who is satisfied).³²⁹

In answer to a question about who washed Fâtima after her death, the transmitters record a Tradition which gives 'Alî as the answer, with the justification that she was 'the Righteous' (*al-Siddîqa*) and could only be washed by one who was also righteous (*siddîq*).³³⁰

³²⁹ Cf. KLY. vol. III, bk. 2 (*Kitâb al-janâ'iz*), bb. *al-Mu'min lâ yakrah 'alâ qabd rūhi-hi*, n. 2: 128; MJL. vol. VI, bb. 6, n. 31: 162, bb. 7, n. 49: 196, vol. XXIV, bb. 34, n. 7: 94, vol. LVIII, bb. 42, n. 24: 48.

³³⁰ KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *Mawlid al-Zabrâ' Fâtima*, n. 2: 458, n. 4: 499, vol. III, bk. 2 (*Kitâb al-janâ'iz*), bb. *al-Rajul yaghsil al-mar'a*, n. 13: 159; SDQ³. vol. I, n. 399: 142; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 148, n. 1: 184; TFA¹. vol. I, bb. 23, n. 67: 440; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 413; HRR¹. vol. II, bb. 24, n. 2825: 530, n. 2834: 533; MJL. vol. XIV, bb. 16, n. 3: 197, vol. XXVII, bb. 2, n. 7: 291, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 16: 184, n. 32: 206, vol. LXXVIII, bb. 8, n. 16: 299; NTR. vol. II, bb. 21, n. 6-1758: 185. Some of the transmitters link Fâtima in this to Maryam, positing that just as Maryam, when she died, could only have been washed by 'Îsâ, so Fâtima could only have been washed by 'Alî. Cf. KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *Mawlid al-Zabrâ' Fâtima*, n. 4: 459; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 148, n. 1: 184; HRR¹. vol. II, bb. 24, n. 2825: 530, n. 2834: 533; MJL. vol. XXVII, bb. 2, n. 7: 251, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 32: 299, vol. LXXVIII, bb. 8, n. 16: 299.

An incident taken up in the Qur'anic text in a narrative concerning the childhood of Maryam, reads:

«And her Lord accepted her with full acceptance and vouchsafed to her a goodly growth; and made Zechariah her guardian. Whenever Zechariah went into the sanctuary where she was, he found that she had food. He said: O Mary! Whence cometh unto thee this (food)? She answered: It is from Allah.. Allah giveth without stint to whom He will» (Q. 3: 37).

Not surprisingly, Fâtima too is fed by angels: this forms part of a particular genre by which almost everything posited about Maryam – from her conversation with angels to her virginity – is posited equally about Fâtima, so as not to diminish her superiority. In Fâtima's case, two elements are of note. The first concerns her 'food' during the period of her pre-existence, reported by al-Majlisî transmitting from al-Sadûq:

"It was said: Prophet of God, where was Fâtima? He said: She was in a hollow under the leg of the Throne. They said: Prophet of God, what was her food? He said: The glorification, hallowing, acclamation and praise of God..."³³¹

A second strand denotes a miraculous feeding after her birth, and takes up as its theme the story of Maryam's miraculous feeding during her childhood under the guardianship of Zakariyyâ': in the case of Fâtima, the story is told in various contexts and with diverse wording. In the account related below, the context is of 'Alî, awaking one morning and finding that there is nothing to eat. He goes out to beg money in order to buy provisions and, having prayed with Muhammad in the mosque, they return home together to Fâtima:

"Then the Prophet took 'Alî by the hand, and they hurried to Fâtima. She was in her prayer niche,

³³¹ SDQ⁶. n. 53: 396; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 3: 4.

and in front of her was a simmering bowl. When she heard the words of the Messenger of God she went and greeted him: she was the most beloved of people to him. He returned her greetings of peace and rubbed her head with his hand...she took the bowl and placed it in front of the Messenger of God. He said: Fâtima, where did you get this food from? I have never seen a color like it, or smelt fragrance like it, or eaten anything as good! Then he put his hands on my shoulders and said: This is given in exchange for your dinars! «*Allah giveth without stint to whom He wills.*»³³²

Like Maryam, Fâtima received this heavenly food while in her place of prayer, immediately situating the story in a religious framework. In all the accounts, the relevant verse of the Qur'ân concerning Maryam in the temple is quoted: sometimes it is Fâtima herself who declares the origin of the food by quoting the verse, while other accounts place the words on the lips of Muhammad. The story further serves the purpose of underscoring both the extreme poverty of 'Alî and Fâtima, at least in the early part of their marriage, as well as their unqualified dependence on God and His providence towards the 'people of the house'. In his commentary on the Tradition, al-Majlisî notes that it is carried by the Sunnî exegete al-Zamakhsharî: Ibn Kathîr and al-Suyûtî also carry it.³³³ Their Shî'a counterpart, al-Bahrânî, transmits it too, but curiously, the more pro-Fâtima Sunnî transmitters like al-Nîsâbûrî remain silent.

³³² RTB¹: 51; AYY. vol I, bb. 3, n. 41: 171; TFA². bb. 69, n. 7-1271: 214-217; RWD¹. vol. II: 528, 532; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 387, 409; TST³: 529; IRB. vol. I: 469; AML. vol. I: 171; ABD.: 114, 359; MJL. vol. XIII, bb. 16, n. 4: 197, vol. XXI, bb. 22, n. 14: 21, vol. XXXV, bb. 6: 251, n. 14: 255, vol. XXXVII, bb. 51, n. 7: 103, n. 8: 105, vol. XLI, bb. 102: 30, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 30: 27, n. 35: 29, n. 38: 31, n. 51: 59, n. 60: 68, n. 63: 76, bb. 12, n. 73: 310, vol. XCIII, bb. 15, n. 25: 147. Among the Sunnî, cf. RHB.: 45-46. Cf. Q. 3: 37.

³³³ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 3: 29. Cf. ZMR. vol. I, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 427. Cf. also KTR². vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 37: 33; SYT. vol. II, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*: 36.

3 FÂTIMA THE VIRGIN: TRADITIONS, TEACHING AND PIETY SURROUNDING THE CONCEPTION AND BIRTH OF AL- HUSAYN

In the pre-Christian Roman Empire, the notion of 'virgin birth' was an esoteric language, used as a way of denoting a man's divinity. In reality, classical and pagan mythologies are suffused with accounts of 'virgin' births, most often expressed through impregnation by a god in human form, or an animal, or even an inanimate object, but almost always without sexual intercourse. In one sense, miraculous conceptions and extraordinary circumstances for births enable humanity to believe in innocence and rectitude, and serve as an example of how cultures maintain a 'savior's' character pure and unsullied. The societal aspiration is that by not permitting its savior to be born through the carnal, sexual act, his or her essence or soul will be without sin. The belief that purity is necessary in all mythological leaders is a universal value (and not, as some hold, an innovation of Christianity), easily traceable in stories from most cultures: the wide diffusion of such stories throughout diverse cultures seems to confirm the so-called 'Parallel School' of Carl Jung (d. 1961), which proposes that the concepts of mythology/religion evolved out of the popularity of evolutionary thought. Human beings react correspondingly to analogous stimuli because they are human, genetically patterned to respond in that way. After a prolonged period of reacting in a particular way, humans pass on (that is, draw from the collective consciousness) acquired traits: the stories of mythology and religion develop because reactivity is part of the collective consciousness. Themes common in mythological stories create a subconscious bond between mankind. The use of unusual or mystical circumstances around mythological births allows people to see a correlation between one culture and another.

In this, Jung is diametrically opposed, for example, to the so-called 'Ritualistic School' or 'Diffusionist School' of James Fra-

zier (d. 1941) and others, which holds that all humans had their origin in one place and spread worldwide, carrying their cultures (stories) with them, so that if separate peoples have the same stories or gods, there must have been contact in which the more sophisticated group passed on its ideas to the more primitive.³³⁴

The Hellenistic world alone has a plethora of virgin birth narratives (among them, Pythagoras, Plato and Alexander). Zeus achieved notoriety for having fathered numerous children by human mothers, impregnating Semele by means of a thunderbolt³³⁵ and Danaë in a shower of gold.³³⁶ In the Greek and Roman pantheon of gods and goddesses, the goddesses themselves could be said to be virgin mothers. Athena and Artemis were regarded as virgins, for having given birth, they dipped themselves into the rivers so that their virginity was renewed. A Greek myth held the same of Juno, who habitually renewed her virginity by bathing in a magical fountain: there are also accounts of a goddess who restored her virginity after sexual intercourse by bathing in a fountain lo-

³³⁴ Jung held that certain ostensibly universal symbols or images are innate and encoded in humanity, archetypes that reside so deep in the collective unconscious that they can never be articulated consciously. He employed this concept of inherent symbols present in all human psyches to explain the cross-cultural appearance of specific images and narrative prototypes. Jung was struck by the fact that his patients in therapy often 'spontaneously' told stories or had dreams that included imagery reminiscent of classical mythology and ethnographic reports from around the world. Faced with this, he eventually hypothesized that these were innate symbols that all humans have and which all humans can access and use. Thus, he implicitly assumed a strong parallelism between individual psychic processes and (group) cultural processes. Much like Freud, Jung felt that myths were group expressions of an innately human psychic phenomenon. Drawing upon a variety of literature, Jung assembled a list of what he saw as common archetypes. He posited that these assisted human beings in processing and dealing with the empirical experiences they went through in their lives, providing a lens by which to make sense of different people, events, etc. and providing the unconscious with a language to express psychological needs or aspects that were underdeveloped or needing attention. According to Jung, the myths are filled with archetypes, which is why he felt that myths usually resonate with people.

³³⁵ Price, S. and Kearns, E, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Mythology*: 504.

³³⁶ Ibid.: 145.

cated between the upper Tigris and Euphrates in the territory in which contemporary Zoroastrians³³⁷ located some of their holy places. This renewable virginity would eventually find a resonance in the Islamic Traditions concerning the maidens of Paradise, but strands of it may well be significant in understanding Fâtima as Virgin and Mother.

The ancient Egyptian queens were believed to have been impregnated by the gods, a *leitmotif* that extends even to the mother of the first Japanese Emperor and the mother of Buddha, who gave birth through divine favor. Even the Chinese had a mother-goddess and virgin with child in her arms, as did the ancient Etruscans. Devaki, the radiant virgin of the Hindu mythology, became the wife of the god Vishnu and bore Krishna, the beloved hero, by Vishnu's hair being placed in her womb. The old Teutonic goddess Hertha (the Earth) was a virgin, but was impregnated by the heavenly Spirit (the Sky), and her image with a child in her arms was to be seen in the sacred groves of Germany. In Norse mythology, Frigga conceived and bore a son, Balder, healer and savior of mankind, through the embrace of Odin, the All-Father. In the Aztec story of Chimalman and Quetzalcoatl, the culture has the virgin Chimalman impregnated by the highest of the gods. There is no mention in the story of the traditional sexual act: instead Chimalman is 'breathed' upon by the Aztec God and becomes pregnant. The child or hero born from Chimalman is considered the 'Son of the Lord of the High Heavens'.³³⁸

Other cultures too have utilized the concept of virgin conceptions to describe the births of their legendary heroes. Campbell writes of 'modified' virgin births, citing Sargon of Argade, a ruler of Mesopotamia (c. 2350 BC) and Moses, drawn from the bul-rushes.³³⁹ He also names Mithra,³⁴⁰ the Persian savior who was

³³⁷ The major, ancient, monotheistic and pre-Islamic religion of Persia, with its founder, Zoroaster, active in the 6TH century B.C. or even earlier. The supreme god was Ahura Mazdâ. Zoroastrianism gradually became contaminated with strands of older religious systems.

³³⁸ Cf. Kingsborough, E.K. *Mexican Antiquities*, vol. VI. London: A. Aglio, 1830-48: 176.

³³⁹ Campbell, J. *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*: 73, 133.

born under a sacred tree beside a hallowed stream, and is depicted as 'emerging' from a 'mother' or 'generative' rock, perceived as the earth giving birth to the archetypal man.³⁴¹ Campbell is adamant that Jesus' virgin birth "must be interpreted as a mystic motif from the Persian or Greek, not Hebrew side of the Christian heritage."³⁴²

By tradition Zoroaster, who began to disseminate his religion in Persia around the 6TH century B.C., was born of a virgin impregnated by a supreme god who sent an emanation of himself to accomplish this task. Zoroaster's unabashedly supernatural parturition was preceded, accompanied, and followed by miracles similar to those recounted in the birth of others touched in a singular way the hand of the gods.³⁴³ But celibacy, so extolled by Mani,³⁴⁴ was abhorred by the virgin-born Zoroaster. Manichaeism extols celibacy as the greatest virtue, advocating it for those initiated in the higher orders: when all other desires are dispelled by a fervent longing for the love of God, and when that love becomes the controlling factor of the devout, he is instructed to take a vow of chastity, not entering into marriage if he desires to serve God unequivocally. Marriage is declared incompatible with sanctity, and is envisaged as impure and defiling. Mani posits sexual intercourse as

³⁴⁰ Prior to the advent of Zoroastrianism, Persia had a polytheistic religious system, of whom Mithra was the most important in the pantheon of gods.

³⁴¹ Campbell, J. *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*: 260-261. The precise relationship between Ahura Mazdâ to his virginal consort Anahita is unclear: it is not implausible that she was regarded as the virgin mother of Mithra, having conceived miraculously, and having, like Mary in Catholic theology, given birth to a child miraculously, without rupture of her hymen. Alternatively, the Traditions relate her giving birth and having the power to renew her virginity by bathing in magical water.

³⁴² Campbell, J. *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*: 336.

³⁴³ Zoroaster distinguished himself from all others whose birth contained supernatural elements: for while Fâtima, for example, fell to the ground and proclaimed the oneness of God, as soon as Zoroaster emerged from his mother's womb, having dazzled bystanders with the alluring light of his divine ancestry, he laughed stridently, signifying that life is good and ought to be enjoyed.

³⁴⁴ Mani or Manes was born around A.D. 216 and propagated a dualistic religion, Manichaeism, which spread throughout Persia and met with severe persecution during the 'Abbâsîd period.

the worst type of uncleanness, with virginity as the highest form of life. All this is conflicts radically with the teachings of Zoroaster. In no period of the history of his religion was celibacy ever deemed a virtue. Those practicing it were not considered more holy or held in higher reverence, as among the Manichaeans: in contrast, their chosen lifestyle was strongly reprehended. Even the priests were not to be celibates, for it was a cardinal point of the faith of every true Zoroastrian that he should marry and rear a family. It is improbable that in the variegated strands of Persian Zoroastrian thought we might discover theological the roots of Fâtima's virginity.

Illustrated here is not merely the wide dispersion of the concept of the virgin-mother, but also its great antiquity. The vision of the 'Perfect Man' has ever hovered over the mind of humanity: and a perfectly instinctive supposition with regard to such a being was that he would be born from a 'Perfect Woman', who according to early ideas would necessarily be the Virgin Earth itself, mother of all things.

Of all the theological and spiritual titles given to Fâtima, the designation 'virgin', expressed by the Arabic *al-'Adhrâ* and more frequently by *al-Batûl* remains the most enigmatic. It is at once obvious that the Islamic understanding of her virginity is vastly different from the Catholic conception of Mary's virginity. Why would Islam insist so unwaveringly upon the designation 'virgin' for Fâtima, even though it had to devise an innovative definition of virginity in order to do so, and is quite unmistakably speaking of a virginity that is not the same physical virginity of Mary (or of the Qur'anic Maryam)? Shî'a Islam presents Fâtima as married with (at least) four children, and there is no suggestion that any of her children were not the result of sexual intercourse or that her marriage with 'Alî was devoid of sexual relations. It is patently clear that Fâtima must be declared a virgin if she is not to become secondary to Maryam, whose virginity is underscored both in the Qur'anic text and in the books of Tradition. But the texts never overcome the ongoing problem that while Maryam's virginity is quite clearly physical, Fâtima's is not. As a way of solving this problem, the books of Shî'a Tradition propose a redefinition of virginity.

«And when the angels said: O Maryam! Lo! Allah hath chosen thee and made thee pure, and hath preferred thee above (all) the women of creation» (Q. 3: 42).

The Qur'anic conception of Maryam's virginity is almost entirely physical. While the verse that declares that God has made her pure is not necessarily a reference to physical virginity, the Qur'ân does insist that Maryam's son 'Îsâ is unfathered (Q. 3: 47, 19: 18-20). It is this unfathered conception and deliverance of a child that clearly defines her virgin state. Even so, these verses, in contradistinction to Catholic Tradition, do not essentially suggest that Maryam's virginity is perpetual, continuing after the birth of 'Îsâ. Nor does the Qur'anic text in any way insinuate that God has removed from the life of Maryam the natural but, in Islamic eyes, reprehensible pain and bleeding of the menstrual cycle, although this is the interpretation proposed by some exegetes, like al-Râzî.³⁴⁵

Fâtima's virginity is presented in dissimilar and varied ways: at least one of these consists of a reinterpretation of the verse of Maryam being purified (Q. 3: 42) by substituting the name of Fâtima: but this does not automatically suggest perpetual virginity, any more than it does in the case of Maryam. Nonetheless, the explanation of Fâtima's virginity, unlike that of Maryam, is not of something physical, but of something esoteric. At no time is there a hint that any of her children are parallel to 'Îsâ in that they are unfathered. Hers is a singularity that is expressed in multifaceted theology.

³⁴⁵ The Sunnî exegete al-Râzî, in his treatment of Q. 3: 42, posits that freedom from menstruation was one of five elements in the purification of Maryam by God (*tabhara-hâ 'an al-hayd*). Cf. RAZ. vol. VIII, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 42: 43. Cf. also QRT. vol. IV, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 42: 82-83. The contemporary Shî'a exegete al-Tabâtabâ'î raises the issue in his examination of the same verse, writing that "it has also been said that her purification means that she was a virgin who did not menstruate." Cf. TBT. vol. VI, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 42: 6-7. Cf. also Ayoub, M. *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, vol. II, *The House of 'Imrân*: 126, 128.

To begin with, number of texts speak of Fâtima guarding her chastity: “Fâtima has guarded her chastity and God has forbidden her offspring to the Fire.”³⁴⁶

These words, literally translated as ‘fortified’ or ‘made inaccessible her private parts’ (the same words used of Maryam in Q. 21: 91) certainly confirm her temporary virginity, that is, prior to her marriage with ‘Alî. The texts then offer two diverse explanations of virginity, with a tentative definition of Maryam and Fâtima together, that at once raise a number of difficulties:

“The Prophet was asked: What defines the virgin? Because, Messenger of God, we heard you say: Maryam is a virgin and Fâtima is a virgin. He said: the virgin is she who does not secrete blood (‘redness’), that is, does not menstruate, because menstruation is reprehensible in the daughters of the prophets.”³⁴⁷

Virginity in this text is carefully redefined, for nothing can be posited about Maryam that cannot also be posited about Fâtima: if Maryam is declared a virgin, Fâtima must be a virgin too. But nowhere in the Qur’anic texts is Maryam’s virginity ever explicitly defined as anything else but that she conceived ‘Îsâ without sexual intercourse. This text specifies Fâtima’s virginity in an innovative and peculiar way, making the lack of menstruation its basis. Even more troublesome is that freedom from menstruation is nowhere

³⁴⁶ SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 264: 63, bb. 58, n. 1: 232; SDQ⁶. nn. 1-6: 105-106; RWD¹. vol. I: 281; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 373; IRB. vol. I: 468, vol. II: 144, 310, 346; HLL²: 351; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 6: 20, bb. 9, n. 2: 230, nn. 3-6: 231, n. 7: 232, vol. XLVI, bb. 11, n. 51: 185, vol. XLVIII: 315, vol. XLIX, bb. 16, nn. 2-3: 217, vol. LXXV, bb. 16, n. 52: 78, vol. XCIII, bb. 27, nn. 14-18: 221-223. Among the Sunnî, cf. HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4789: 179; ISH. vol. IV, bb. 268, n. 5277: 209; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 9: 94; RHB.: 48; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*: 202; MTQ. vol. V: 97.

³⁴⁷ RTB¹: 54; SDQ⁶. n. 17: 64; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 144, n. 1: 181; FNR. vol. I: 149; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 378; IRB. vol. I: 464; NTR. vol. II, n. 3-1344, bb. 37: 37; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, nn. 13-14: 15-16, vol. LXXVIII, bb. 4, n. 36: 112, vol. XCII, bb. 129: 383.

posited of other daughters of the prophets: certainly, there are no texts that make a similar claim for Muhammad's other daughters, Zaynab, Ruqayya and Umm Kulthûm. Lammens is quite correct in his claim that, at the approach of Fâtima, her three sisters vanish and fade unaccountably into history.³⁴⁸

Ibn Hanbal proposes a Tradition, which seems at once to contradict this interpretation of Fâtima's virginity. In it, Fâtima comes to Muhammad to say that she is menstruating: he tells her that the blood she is shedding is not menstrual, but merely a vein, and directs her to cease with her prayer, wait a few days until it is settled, then to wash, change garments and pray. In both these Traditions, the woman involved is identified merely as 'Fâtima', leading one to believe that it is Muhammad's daughter.³⁴⁹ Nevertheless, all the other major transmitters who recount these Traditions identify the woman involved either as Fâtima bt. Abî Jaysh, or as Fâtima bt. Abî Hubaysh, or as Fâtima bt. Qays (or otherwise as Umm Habîba bt. Jahsh, or merely as 'a woman'). In most, but not all cases, Ibn Hanbal identifies the Fâtima of whom he is writing either as 'daughter of Muhammad' or 'daughter of the Messenger of God', or by the customary 'peace be upon her' or 'may God be pleased with her'. Here, he does not: and he certainly seems to be speaking of Muhammad's daughter. Nevertheless, the weight of evidence lies with the majority of transmitters.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ Lammens, H. "Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad": 221.

³⁴⁹ HNB. vol. X, *Hadîth Umm Salama*, n. 26655: 196, n. 26802: 227. But cf. also HNB. vol. IX, *Hadîth 'Ā'isha*, n. 24592: 367 (in which the bleeding woman is identified as Umm Habîba), n. 25679: 569 and vol. X, *Hadîth 'Ā'isha*, n. 25739: 15, n. 26315: 122-123 (in which the woman in question is named as Fâtima bt. Abî Hubaysh).

³⁵⁰ Cf. DRM. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-salât wa-l-tahâra*), bb. 80, n. 114: 196, n. 120: 198, nn. 124, 125: 199, n. 128: 200; BUK¹. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-wudû'*), ch. 67, n. 228: 146, bk. 6 (*Kitâb al-hayd*), ch. 10, n. 303: 183, n. 317: 190-191, n. 322: 194; MSL. vol. I, bk. 3 (*Kitâb al-hayd*), ch. 131, nn. 652, 653, 654, 655, 656: 189, nn. 657, 658: 190; MJA. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-tahâra wa-sunani-hâ*), bb. 115, nn. 620, 621: 203, n. 624: 204, bb. 116, n. 626: 205; ADD. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-tahâra*), bb. 107: 63-64, bb. 108: 65; NSA¹. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-tahâra*), bb. *Dhikr al-ightisâl min al-hayd*: 116-119, bb. *al-Aqrâ'*: 120-122, bk. 3 (*Kitâb al-hayd wa-l-istihâda*), bb. *Dhikr al-istihâda wa-iqbâl al-dam*: 181-182, bb. *Dhikr al-aqrâ'*: 183-184.

A curious reference to this state of affairs in the life of Fâtima is found in a Tradition, carried with a slight variation in the wording, by some Sunnî and Shî'a transmitters:

"Between the bearing of al-Husayn and the birth of al-Hasan there was nothing but purity."³⁵¹

Some transmitters add the word 'perfect' to denote the purity, while others omit the words 'bearing' and 'birth', so that it reads literally: "There was purity between al-Hasan and al-Husayn." Unquestionably, this text (specifically in its reduced form) does not refer to a purity of relationship between the two brothers, but points rather to the time period between their births. It cannot mean that Fâtima had no sexual relations with her husband during the period between the births: for one thing, Shî'a Tradition holds the conception of al-Husayn to be in the time period denoted by the Tradition quoted above (fifty days after the birth of al-Hasan), and for another, this would mean that al-Husayn's was a virginal conception, and there is no hint of this in Sunnî or Shî'a Islam. It can only refer to Fâtima's lack of menstruation: that, between the birth of her first child and the conception of her second, she did not return to the cycle of menstruation normal to a woman, since God had removed menstruation from her.

The solitary Qur'anic reference to menstruation is found in Q. 2: 222, in which the male believer is instructed:

«They question thee (O Muhammad) concerning menstruation. Say: it is an illness, so let women alone at such times and go not in unto them till they are cleansed. And when they have purified themselves, then go in unto them as Allah hath enjoined upon you. Truly Allah loveth those who

³⁵¹ Among the Sunnî, cf. BGD. vol. I: 142; BRR. vol. I: 393; ATH². vol. II: 18; RHB.: 118; SQL¹. vol. I, n. 1724: 331; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib al-Husayn*: 185; SHL. n. 875: 404. Among the Shî'a, cf. KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *Mawlid al-Husayn*, n. 2: 463-464; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Fî ma'âlî umûri-hâ*: 449; HRR¹. vol. XXI, bb. 17, n. 23355: 381; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 42: 258; NTR. vol. XV, bb. 12, n. 3-17732: 124, bb. 50, n. 2-17838: 158.

turn unto him, and loveth those who have a care for cleanliness.»

The Arabic *adhan*, which Pickthall renders as 'illness', carries the sense of 'damage' or 'harm' or 'injury', but is diversely rendered by English translators who, without diminishing its negativity, give it a broad range of meanings.³⁵² The Muslim commentators attempt to clarify the precise meaning: for al-Tabarî, menstruation is called *adhan* by reason of the stench of its odor and the uncleanness or filth (*qadhar*) of its impurity (*najâsa*).³⁵³ Al-Zamakhsharî designates it as something unclean or filthy (*qadhir*), which leads to antipathy and revulsion in those who encounter it.³⁵⁴ Al-Qurtubî renders *adhan* slightly less censoriously, as something which hurts, or offends, or wrongs women, but then concurs with al-Tabarî that it is an allegory for *qadhar*, and applies to it the term *makrûh* (reprehensible). He refers his reader to further Qur'anic texts: Q. 2: 264 (in both 2: 263 and 2: 264 Pickthall renders the word *adhan* as 'injury') and Q. 33: 48 (in which Pickthall translates the same word as 'noxious talk').³⁵⁵ Al-Râzî too, designates *adhan* as the manifestation of an illness or weakness, stressing the necessity of isolation for a woman who is in her menses, not only for its disagreeable odor and foul color, but also because of the powerful impetuosity it produces in its victim.³⁵⁶

Certainly, the Islamic restrictions against menstruating women, as reflected in the corpus of Traditions, are less harsh than those of the Jewish, permitting almost everything (including association) except for sexual intercourse.³⁵⁷ There are a number of Traditions forbidding women to fast and pray during the 'tempo-

³⁵² While among English interpreters of the Qur'ân, Rodwell, Sale and Yusuf Ali prefer 'pollution', Palmer renders it as 'hurt' and Irving, more blandly, as 'nuisance'. Shakir and Assad, like Irving, reduce the negativity somewhat by translating it as 'discomfort' and 'vulnerable condition' respectively.

³⁵³ YTB¹. vol. IV, *Sûrat al-baqara*, v. 222, nn. 4234-4237: 394-375.

³⁵⁴ ZMR. vol. I, *Sûrat al-baqara*, v. 222 : 201.

³⁵⁵ QRT. vol. III, *Sûrat al-baqara*, v. 222: 85-86.

³⁵⁶ RAZ. vol. VI, *Sûrat al-baqara*, v. 222: 66.

³⁵⁷ Cf. for example TIB. vol. I, bk. 27 (*Kitâb al-fitan*), bb. 12, n. 545: 171.

rary illness' of their menses,³⁵⁸ but the prayers, unlike the fasting, need not be made up afterwards.³⁵⁹ Nor is circambulation (*tawâf*) of the *Ka'ba* permitted³⁶⁰, but there appears to be no prohibition of reading or reciting the Qur'ân.³⁶¹ Ultimately though, menstruation militates against a woman: for although forbidden to pray and fast during menstruation, this is nonetheless regarded as a defect in their religion.³⁶²

But Fâtima is spared all of this, by a unique Divine favor, for not even of Maryam is it explicitly claimed that her purification by God entailed a suspension or removal of menses: indeed, the texts insist that this lack of menstruation makes Fâtima unlike all other women.³⁶³ The miracle granted to Fâtima echoes in a sense Mary's Immaculate Conception in Catholic dogma: a God who steps in and bends the laws of nature by removing something that is inevitable but odious.

“When Fâtima, peace be upon her, was born, God, powerful and lofty, inspired an angel, by whom He loosened the tongue of Muhammad, who called her Fâtima. Then He said: I have weaned you with knowledge and I have weaned you from menstruation. Then Abû Ja'far said: By God! God, may He be blessed and exalted, has weaned her with knowledge and from menstruation by the covenant.”³⁶⁴

Nor does this matter go unnoticed by Fâtima's peers:

³⁵⁸ BUK¹. vol. I, bk. 6 (*Kitâb al-hayd*), ch. 8, n. 301: 181-182, ch. 10, n. 303: 183, ch. 26, n. 322: 194, ch. 30, n. 327: 196.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.: ch. 22, n. 318: 191.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.: ch. 3, n. 293: 177-178, ch. 9, n. 302: 182-183.

³⁶¹ Ibid.: ch. 9, n. 182 (n.n.).

³⁶² Ibid.: ch. 8, n. 301: 181-182.

³⁶³ TST². vol. I, n. 163: 111; MJL. vol. XXXVII, bb. 2, n. 9: 43.

³⁶⁴ KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-hujja*), bb. *Mawlid al-Zabrâ' Fâtima*, n. 6: 460; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 4: 179; IRB. vol. I: 463; MJL. vol. XLIII bb. 2, n. 9: 7, n. 14: 16.

“Anas b. Mâlik, on the authority of his mother, who said: I never saw Fâtima bleed, either in menstruation or in parturition.”³⁶⁵

The Shî‘a texts then offer a second specification of virginity. Al-Majlisî elucidates it in a note attached to one of the Traditions about menstruation being reprehensible for a prophet’s daughter:

“The virgin is separated, that is, she is separated from the women of her time by the lack of seeing blood. He said, at the end: A woman virgin is separated from men, who have no lust for her. Maryam the mother of ‘Îsâ was named in this way, and Fâtima was named ‘the Virgin’ to separate her from the women of her time, in superiority, religion and nobility. It was also said to separate her from the world for the service of God Most High. Al-Fayrûzâbâdî said something similar to this.”³⁶⁶

The theme of separation in this Tradition, already extant in the definition of the name Fâtima, is highlighted by a number of similar Traditions. Al-Majlisî transmits that:

“God forbade ‘Alî women while Fâtima was still alive because she was pure and did not menstruate. ‘Ubayd al-Harawî³⁶⁷ said in *al-Gharîbayn* that Maryam was called a virgin because she was cut off from men, and Fâtima was called a virgin because she was cut off from an equal.”³⁶⁸

³⁶⁵ SDQ¹. n. 9: 182; SDQ³. vol. I, n. 193: 89; TBR¹.: 148; MJL. vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 36: 64, vol. XLIII bb. 3, n. 9: 21. Among the Sunnî, cf. RHB.: 44.

³⁶⁶ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 13: 15.

³⁶⁷ Abû ‘Ubayd Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmân al-Harawî al-Bashânî (d. 401/1010: Cf. GAL S. 1: 200) in his *Kitâb al-gharîbayn fî al-qur’ân wa-l-hadîth*.

³⁶⁸ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 14: 16. Cf. also IRB. vol. III: 330.

The declaration that Fâtima is a 'maiden of Paradise in human form' (*hawrâ' insiyya*)³⁶⁹ means, in a sense, virginity, for this is the perpetually renewable status of these creatures. The Arabic singular *hawrâ'* (pl. *hûr*) has come to mean the 'maidens of Paradise', the large black pupils of whose eyes are in sharp and beautiful contrast to the whiteness of the irises (and the paleness of their skin). Most pertinent in terms of Fâtima are the Qur'anic verses which describe these *hûr* as 'virgins', designated by the Arabic plural *abkâr* (Q. 56: 36), untouched by man or *jinn* (Q. 55: 56, 74) and 'pure wives', which Pickthall inexplicably renders as 'companions' (Q. 2: 25, 4: 57). This last virtue is, according to the commentators, that they are free from bodily impurity and defects of character. To the brief Qur'anic statements are added the Traditions and traditional exegesis: what must be underlined here is that their virginity is consistently renewable, a theme already encountered in pagan mythology. Having been purified, they suffer neither the distress of menstruation, nor any human craving, nor the pain of childbirth, for they bear none.

In which of these characteristics precisely is Fâtima a human *hawrâ'*? Is her virginity understood in like manner to theirs, as something renewable? Of itself, the designation serves to render Fâtima ethereal and not quite human, giving her a slightly indefinable status, by which physical, human virginity cannot be effectively judged. While some Sunnî transmitters hold that she is a human *hawrâ'* because, like them, she does not suffer menses,³⁷⁰ it is clear, as we have seen, that her status of human *hawrâ'* is most intimately bound up with the notion of her pre-existent light and of her conception in the womb of her mother Khadîja by means of heavenly

³⁶⁹ SDQ¹. n. 7: 460; SDQ⁵. vol. I, bb. 11, n. 3: 115; SDQ⁶. n. 53: 396; FNR. vol. I: 149; TBR². vol. II: 408; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 383; ABD.: 240; MJL. vol. IV, bb. 1, n. 4: 3, vol. VIII, bb. 23, n. 6: 119, n. 160: 188, vol. XLIII, bb. 1, nn. 2-3: 4, bb. 2, n. 17: 18, bb. 3, n. 42: 43, vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 33: 240. Among the Sunnî, cf. BGD. vol. V, n. 2481: 87, vol. XII, n. 6772: 331; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 33: 105; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî fadl Fâtima*: 411-413, bb. *Fî dhikr tazwîj Fâtima bi-'Alî*: 421; SFI. vol. II, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 184; MTQ. vol. V: 97.

³⁷⁰ Cf. for example JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî dhikr tazwîj Fâtima bi-'Alî*: 421; MTQ. vol. V: 97.

fruit.

The conception and birth of al-Husayn, in tandem with that of Fâtima his mother, is not only meticulously encased in accounts of heavenly intervention, but also contains elements upon which the transmitters are not wholly agreed. One of these more pragmatic features is the dating of his birth, although this factor is not as crucial as it is in Fâtima's life. The Sunnî historian al-Tabarî notes that al-Hasan was born about halfway through *Ramadân* of the third year of the *hijra* (i.e. 3/625) and that Fâtima became pregnant with al-Husayn in the same year, some saying within fifty days of al-Hasan's birth.³⁷¹ Later in his work, he posits that al-Husayn was born in *Sha'bân* of the fourth year of the *hijra* (January 4/626),³⁷² adding that there are some who claim that al-Hasan was in fact born in the second year of the *hijra* (and, concomitantly, al-Husayn in the third), but that if Fâtima and 'Alî were married in the second year of the *hijra*, such reports about al-Hasan are erroneous.³⁷³ Few other Sunnî transmitters are much occupied with the dating of his birth: al-Nîsâbûrî, for example, merely mentions that he was born one year and ten months after his brother al-Hasan, while al-Khawârizmî, noting the discrepancies among the transmitters, posits the third year of the *hijra* for al-Hasan and the fourth year for al-Husayn, as does al-Shablanjî.³⁷⁴

It is the Shi'a transmitters who cannot agree: with rare exceptions (positing the months of *Rabi' al-awwal* or *Jumâdâ al-ûlâ*), most agree that he was born in the month of *Sha'bân*. The major discrepancy lies in which year of the *hijra* the birth occurred: some posit the third,³⁷⁵ others the fourth.³⁷⁶

³⁷¹ YTB². vol. VII, n. 1431: 142. Among the Sunnî transmitters, cf. for example SQL¹. vol. I: 393; SHL.: 113.

³⁷² YTB². vol. VII. n. 1453: 161.

³⁷³ YTB². vol. VII, n. 1367: 91-92.

³⁷⁴ HNA. vol. III, Part 3, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib ahl bayt rasûl Allâh*, n. 4885: 210; KWZ. Part I, ch. 6, *Fadâ'il al-Hasan wa-l-Husayn*, n. 1: 135, ch. 7, *Fadâ'il al-Husayn wa-l-khâssat bi-hi*, n. 1: 209; SHL.: 113.

³⁷⁵ RTB¹.: 71; KLY. vol. I, *Kitâb al-hujja*, bb. *Mawlid al-Husayn b. 'Alî*, n. 3: 464; TFA¹. vol. II, bb. 15: 41.

³⁷⁶ TST⁶.: 12; IRB. vol. II: 40, 53; MJL. vol. XIX, bb. 8: 192, vol. XX, bb. 16, n. 2: 182, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 1: 237, vol. XLIV, bb. 26 n. 15: 198, bb. 26: 201.

The miraculous stories that encase the annunciation of his birth, his conception and his parturition are a fusion of the emblematic genre of story that is constructed around the birth of any savior or a hero. Among these, the following are the most significant.

We have already examined some of the texts dealing with the pre-existence of Fâtima and her creation from light: most prominent among these is the *ashbâb* Tradition, which almost invariably contain reference to al-Husayn and his older brother al-Hasan as constituent members of a pre-existent family deriving from the light of God. These texts, with variant wording, are found throughout the corpus of Shî'a Tradition, as well as in some Sunnî books, and sufficient examples are given earlier in this work.

Attendant upon the date of al-Husayn's birth is a well-attested Tradition, carried by many of the foremost Shî'a transmitters, that Fâtima carried him in her womb for a period of only six months. Most of them correlate this miraculous gestation with 'Îsâ son of Maryam, who is held by pious tradition to have had a gestation of the same period of time.

“She gave birth to him in six months: the birth of a child in six months is unheard of, except for al-Husayn and 'Îsâ son of Maryam.”³⁷⁷

Curiously, a few transmitters omit the name of 'Îsâ, ascribing a six month gestation instead to Yahyâ, son of Zakariyyâ,³⁷⁸ leading the Shî'a scholar Ibn Namâ al-Hillî to offer a laconic note in his *Muthîr*

³⁷⁷ RTB¹: 71-72; KLY. vol. I, *Kitâb al-hujja*, bb. *Mawlid al-Husayn b. 'Alî*, n. 4: 464; QQM. bb. 16, n. 6: 125; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 156: 205; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Fî musâwâti-hî*: 300, vol. IV, bb. *Fî mu'jizâti-hî*: 57; IRB. vol. I: 583; HRR¹. vol. II, bb. 12, n. 2756: 502; MJL. vol. XIV, bb. 17, nn. 2-3: 207, vol. XXV, bb. 9, n. 15: 254, vol. XXXIX: 71. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 31: 253, n. 44: 258, vol. XLIV, bb. 22: 162, bb. 26, n. 14: 198, bb. 30, n. 17: 232, vol. LXVI, bb 37: 266. Among the Sunnî, cf. RHB.: 118.

³⁷⁸ ABD.: 292, 294, 562-563, 565; MJL. vol. XXIII, bb. 15, n. 23: 272, vol. XXXVI, bb. 39, n. 137: 158, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 20: 245, n. 31: 253, nn. 44-45: 208.

al-abẓân that “some say ‘Îsâ and some Yahyâ.”³⁷⁹ The Sunnî historian al-Tabarî mentions that the Christians claimed that Yahyâ (John the Baptist) was born six months before ‘Îsâ (Jesus).³⁸⁰ So in fact do some Muslims, like al-Tha‘labî in his *Qisas al-anbiyâ*.³⁸¹ But although the Tradition of Yahyâ (or ‘Îsâ) being only six months in the womb abounds among the Shî‘a, it is scarcely found among their Sunnî counterparts, suggesting that the six month’s gestation could be a interpolation of the six month period between the births of Yahyâ and ‘Îsâ. Nevertheless, the Tradition achieves its primary aim: to elevate al-Husayn, while still in the womb, to the distinctive status of Yahyâ or ‘Îsâ, thereby separating him from other men, and suggesting something very special about him even from the time of his conception.

This elevation is complemented by a second Tradition, which will be examined later, and which claims that the heavens and the earth have only ever wept for two men, Yahyâ and al-Husayn, as well as a third Tradition, based on Q. 19: 7 carried by very few transmitters, which posits that, as in the case of Yahyâ, so too in the case of al-Husayn, no-one had ever been named thus before:

“I heard Abû ‘Abd Allâh³⁸² saying: «*We have given the same name to none before (him)*» Al-Husayn b. ‘Alî: no-one before him had this name, and Yahyâ b. Zakariyyâ: no-one before him had this name...”³⁸³

The detachment of al-Husayn from other men and his elevation to a higher status is articulated in another arcane Tradition, transmit-

³⁷⁹ Died 650/1252. Neither his name nor his work is recorded by Brockelmann. Cf. *Muthîr al-abẓân*: 12.

³⁸⁰ YTB². vol. IV, nn. 711-712: 102.

³⁸¹ TLB.: 12.

³⁸² The sixth Imâm.

³⁸³ QQM. bb. 28, n. 10: 182-183; AYY.: 295; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 22: 211.

ted by al-Majlisî from al-Astarâbâdhî and from al-Karâjakî's³⁸⁴ *Kanẓ jamî' al-fawâ'id*:

“She became pregnant with al-Husayn, and God guarded her and the one in her womb from Iblîs.”³⁸⁵

This Tradition is carried by none of the chief Shî'a sources, but is closely related to the Qur'anic verse in which the wife of 'Imrân and mother of Maryam, having consecrated to God the child in her womb, dedicates her to God at the moment of her birth:

«And when she was delivered she said: My Lord! Lo! I am delivered of a female – Allah knew best of what she was delivered – the male is not as the female; and lo! I have named her Mary, and lo! I crave Thy protection for her and for her offspring from Satan the outcast» (Q. 3: 36).

This verse is expanded by Muhammad in a Tradition we have already seen:

“There is none born of the children of Âdam whom Satan does not touch as soon as he is born, and who does not raise his voice in a cry from the touch of Satan, except for Maryam and her son.”³⁸⁶

To Maryam and her son is now added al-Husayn, enriching his status in a careful re-reading of the Qur'anic verse and adaptation of this Tradition first carried by al-Bukhârî:

³⁸⁴ Abû al-Fath Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmân b. 'Uthmân al-Karâjakî (d. 499/1057: cf. GAL S. I: 602, 969 and Sezgin 1: 551).

³⁸⁵ ABD.: 562; MJL. vol. XXIII, bb. 15, n. 23: 272, vol. XXXVI, bb. 39, n. 137: 108. Iblîs is one of the Islamic names denoting Satan.

³⁸⁶ BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 55 (*Kitâb abâdîth al-anbiyâ'*), ch. 39, n. 641: 426-427.

“On the authority of Abû ‘Abd Allâh,³⁸⁷ who said: When Fâtima became pregnant with al-Husayn, Jibra’îl went to the Messenger of God and said: Fâtima will give birth to a boy, whom your community after you will kill. When Fâtima became pregnant with al-Husayn she was reluctant in carrying him and at the time of her giving birth to him, she was reluctant at his birth. Then Abû ‘Abd Allâh said: Never in the world has a mother been seen to give birth to a boy with such reluctance, but she was reluctant after having learned that he will be killed. And this verse came down about her: *«And We have commended unto man kindness toward parents. His mother beareth him with reluctance, and bringeth him forth with reluctance, and the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months.»*”³⁸⁸

The insertion in this Tradition by al-Kulaynî and others of the Qur’anic verse (Q. 46: 15) to underscore the parturition of al-Husayn by Fâtima ‘in tears’ heralds a whole series of harrowing forewarnings of his future martyrdom even before his birth: the major part of this series is expressed through angelic visitation, but the warnings also come through Muhammad in some sort of vision, or by individuals in their dreams. Three examples will suffice to illustrate this genre:

“On the authority of Abû ‘Abd Allâh,³⁸⁹ who said: Jibra’îl came down to Muhammad and said to him: Muhammad, God announces to you a child who will be born of Fâtima, and whom your

³⁸⁷ The sixth Imâm.

³⁸⁸ KLY. vol. I, *Kitâb al-hujja*, bb. *Mawlid al-Husayn b. ‘Alî*, n. 3: 464; QQM. bb. 16, n. 4: 122; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî imâmat Abî ‘Abd Allâh al-Husayn*: 57; ABD.: 563; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 21: 246, n. 31: 253, vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 16: 231, vol. LIII, bb. 29, n. 126: 102, vol. LXVI, bb. 37: 266. Cf. Q. 46: 15. I have followed Pickthall in rendering the verb *karaha-yakrahu* as ‘reluctance’ although in reality it carries a much stronger sense of ‘to loathe’, ‘to hate’ or ‘to feel disgust’.

³⁸⁹ The sixth Imâm.

community after you will kill. He said: Jibraʾīl, peace to my Lord, I have no need of a child who will be born of Fâtima, and whom my community after me will kill. He ascended, and then came down and said the same thing to him. Muhammad said: Jibraʾīl, peace to my Lord, I have no need of a child who will be born of Fâtima, and whom my community after me will kill. Jibraʾīl ascended to Heaven, and then came down and said: Muhammad, your Lord greets you and announces to you that He is the One who sets in his descendents the Imamate (*al-imâma*), the authority (*al-wilâya*) and the testament (*al-wasiyya*). He said: I am content. Then he sent to Fâtima: God has announced to me a child who will be born of you, and whom my community after me will kill. Fâtima sent to him: I have no need of a child from me, whom your community after you will kill. He sent to her: God has already placed in his descendents the Imamate, the authority and the testament. She sent to him: I am content. And «*she bore him with reluctance and brought him forth with reluctance...*».³⁹⁰

This story is archetypal in the narratives of al-Husayn's conception and birth, and is recounted in various ways and in different settings. One of the most prominent, for example, is a visit by God to Muhammad as he sits in the house of Fâtima with al-Husayn in his lap. Inexplicably, Muhammad begins to weep, and in response to Fâtima's confusion, says that he has, in that very hour, seen the Most High in a most beautiful form (*fi ahsan sûra*).³⁹¹ God questions

³⁹⁰ KLY. vol. I, *Kitâb al-hujja*, bb. *Mawlid al-Husayn b. 'Alî*, n. 4: 464; QQM. bb. 16, n. 6: 123-124; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 156, n. 3: 205; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî imâmat Abî 'Abd Allâh al-Husayn*: 62-63; ABD.: 562-563; MJL. vol. XXIII, bb. 15, n. 23: 272, vol. XXV, bb. 9, n. 15: 254, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 20: 245, vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 17: 232.

³⁹¹ Only on rare occasions in the Old and New Testaments is God Himself is said to appear in a dream (Gen. 20: 3, 28: 13, 1 Kgs. 3: 5): otherwise, He communicates through an angel. For a Sunnî discussion of Muhammad seeing God in 'a most beautiful form' (*fi ahsan sûra*) during his

Muhammad about his love for al-Husayn. “He is the delight of my eye,” replies Muhammad, “my sweet basil, the fruit of my heart and the skin between my eyes.” God then places His hand on al-Husayn’s head, saying that His blessings, prayers, mercy and favor are upon the boy, but announcing that he is the master of the martyrs from first to last.³⁹² In some of the accounts, Muhammad is given red soil from Karbalâ’, the place of al-Husayn’s death. In others, it is either Jibrîl or God who makes the announcement. Still others omit any reference to Divine or angelic visitation, and articulate the announcement of death through a vision given to Muhammad.³⁹³

A further exemplar of this category of narrative is found in the stories of angels, sometimes alone and sometimes in large numbers, often in curious shapes and forms, visiting Muhammad in various places – frequently in the house of Umm Salama – to console him over al-Husayn’s future martyrdom. An example is recorded by Ibn Tâ’ûs:

“A full year after the birth of al-Husayn, twelve angels came down to the Messenger of God: one of them was in the form of a lion, the second in the form of a bull, the third in the form of a sea monster (dragon) and the fourth in the form of a child of Âdam, and the remaining eight in various forms. Their faces were red, their eyes wet with tears, and having spread their wings they said: Muhammad, what befell Hâbîl (Abel) through

‘night journey’, cf. KTR². vol. VI, *Sûrat sâd*, vv. 65-70: 84, *Sûrat al-najm*, vv. 5-18: 448-449; SYT. vol. V, *Sûrat sâd*, vv. 67-70: 596-597, vol. VI, *Sûrat al-najm*, vv. 5-18: 159.

³⁹² Cf. QQM. bb. 21, n. 1: 140, n. 2: 70; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 29: 238.

³⁹³ Among the Sunnî transmitters of this genre, cf. TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *Manâqib al-Hasan wa-l-Husayn*, n. 3774: 333; HNA. vol. III, Part 3, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sahâba*), bb. *Amwal fadâ’il Abî ‘Abd Allâh al-Husayn b. ‘Alî*, n. 4884: 210, n. 4888: 211-212, nn. 4890, 4892: 213; RHB.: 146-147; TIB. vol. III, bk. 30 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. 10, *Manâqib ahl bayt al-nabî*, n. 6136: 1733, n. 6157: 1737-1738; SQL⁴. vol. II: 347; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib al-Husayn*: 187-189; SHL.: 114.

Qâbîl (Cain) will befall your child al-Husayn, son of Fâtima: he will receive the same recompense as Hâbîl, and his killers will bear the same responsibility as Qâbîl. There remained in the heavens not an angel 'drawn near'³⁹⁴ who did not come down to the Prophet, each of them greeting him and consoling him about al-Husayn. They informed him about the reward he would receive and showed him his tomb, and the Prophet said: O God, forsake those who forsake him and kill those who kill him...''³⁹⁵

The symbolism of the angelic forms is a resonance of the sort of apocryphal language used in the Old Testament Book of Daniel, as well as in some of the prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel and in the New Testament Book of Revelation.³⁹⁶

The books of Tradition abound with these stories, related with an assortment of details. The Sunnî transmitter al-Khawârizmî, for example, dedicates a whole chapter of his *Maqât al-Husayn* to relating them from various sources, while a number of his Sunnî colleagues, including Ibn Hanbal, al-Nîsâbûrî and al-Tabarî relate the story in various settings, sometimes in an angelic visitation, sometimes in a vision, always containing the same strand of a tragic augury.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ The 'angels drawn near' are named in the Qur'ân as the *muqarrabûn*. Cf. Q. 4: 172, where Pickthall renders the word as 'favoured'.

³⁹⁵ TST⁶: 13-14; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 46: 246. Among the Sunnî, cf. KWZ. Part I, ch. 8, *Akbbâr rasûl Allâh 'an al-Husayn wa-ahwâli-hi*, n. 12: 237.

³⁹⁶ Cf. for example the four heavenly creatures described by John in the bk. of Revelation: the first like a lion, the second like an ox, the third with a face like a man and the fourth like an eagle (Rev. 4: 7). Ezekiel's four creatures all have the shape of a man, but each has four faces: of a man, of a lion, of an ox and of an eagle (Ez. 1: 5-11). Cf. also Muhammad's vision during his 'night journey' of the four angels bearing the Throne (Q. 40: 7): the first in the form of a man, the second in the form of a bull, the third in the form of an eagle and the fourth in the form of a lion. Cf. SYT. vol. VI, *Sûrat al-najm*, vv. 5-18: 159.

³⁹⁷ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 648: 184-185; vol. IV, *Musnad Anas b. Mâlik*, n. 13539: 482, n. 13796: 527; TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50

A final example of such accounts is expressed in the dreams of people. One of these dreams, that of Umm al-Fadl, is recorded both by Sunnî and Shî'a transmitters, and although it has ominous overtones, Muhammad interprets it in a positive manner:

“On the authority of Umm al-Fadl, daughter of al-Hârith, that she went to the Messenger of God and said: Messenger of God, tonight I had a shocking dream. He said: What was it? She said: It was ominous. He said: What was it? She said: I saw what seemed to be a piece of your body, which was cut off and placed in my lap. He said: You saw something good. Fâtima will give birth to a boy, and he will be in your lap. Fâtima gave birth to al-Husayn and Umm al-Fadl said: He was in my lap, just as the Messenger of God had said.”³⁹⁸

Ultimately, the dream which Umm al-Fadl thought so ominous, and which Muhammad interprets so encouragingly, is portentous after all, for the same Tradition continues with a forewarning from Jibrîl and Muhammad in tears. But this is not finally the point of the Tradition: primarily, as Ayoub notes, it serves to elucidate the close relationship between the Imâm and the Prophet.³⁹⁹ A number of Sunnî scholars record a slightly different dream, this time of Ibn ‘Abbâs, in which he sees Muhammad collecting al-Husayn’s blood

(*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *al-Hasan wa-l-Husayn*, n. 3774:333; HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), bb. *Annal jadâ’il Abî ‘Abd Allâh al-Husayn b. ‘Alî*, n. 4890: 213, vol. IV, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), *Dbikr Umm Salama*, nn. 6843, 6844: 101, vol. IV, bk. 47 (*Ta’bîr al-ru’yâ*), n. 8282: 553-554; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*; ATH¹. vol. III: 169; RTB¹.: 147-148; SQL⁴. vol. II, bb. *al-Hâ’*: 347; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib al-Husayn*: 189-190, 193.

³⁹⁸ RTB¹.: 72; MFD¹. vol. II: 129; TBR¹.: 218; TST⁶.: 12-13; IRB. vol. II: 7; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 30: 238, n. 46: 246. Among the Sunnî, cf. HNA. vol. III, Part 3, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-sabâba*), bb. *Annal jadâ’il Abî ‘Abd Allâh al-Husayn b. ‘Alî*, n. 4884: 210; TIB. vol. III, bk. 30 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. 10, *Manâqib ahl bayt al-nabî*, n. 6171, p. 1741; SHL.: 114.

³⁹⁹ Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*: 74.

in a container,⁴⁰⁰ as well as a similar dream by Umm Salama, in which she sees Muhammad, weeping and with dust on his head, after he has been forewarned.⁴⁰¹ A handful of the Sunnî transmitters also carry accounts of such predictions of the killing of al-Husayn, sometimes by Jibrîl, to his father 'Alî.⁴⁰²

The Shî'a scholar al-Majlisî, transmitting from al-Sadûq, records another ominous dream, of one Umm Ayman, so distressing that she is hardly able to relate it to Muhammad. She dreams that some of his limbs are discarded in her home. Once more, an ill-omened dream is given a positive interpretation by Muhammad: that Fâtima is about to give birth to al-Husayn (already named thus before his birth, although other Shî'a texts clarify this as being by Divine command⁴⁰³), and that Umm Ayman will assist in raising

⁴⁰⁰ HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Abd Allâh b. al-'Abbâs*, n. 2165: 521, n. 2553: 606; HNA. vol. IV, bk. 47 (*Ta'bîr al-ru'yâ*), n. 8281: 553; BGD, vol. I: 142; BRR. vol. I: 395-396; ATH¹. vol. II: 22; RHB.: 148; TIB. vol. III, bk. 30 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. 10, *Manâqib abl bayt al-nabî*, n. 6172: 1741-1742; SQL¹. vol. I, n. 1724: 331; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib al-Husayn*: 93-94.

⁴⁰¹ TRM. vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *Manâqib al-Hasan wa-l-Husayn*, n. 3774: 333; HNA. vol. IV, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sabâba*), *Dhikr Umm Salama*, n. 6843: 101; ATH². vol. II: 22; RHB.: 148; SQL⁴. vol. II, bb. *al-Hâ'*: 356. Among the Shî'a, cf. for e.g. SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî imâmat Abî 'Abd Allâh al-Husayn*: 63.

⁴⁰² SQL⁴. vol. II: 347; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Manâqib al-Husayn*: 187.

⁴⁰³ A discussion of the naming of al-Husayn falls outside of the parameters of this work and would be a digression. Suffice it to say that there are two major strands among the transmitters: the first is that Muhammad names him al-Husayn at the command of God given through Jibrîl (cf. SDQ¹: 134; SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 5: 25; SDQ⁶. n. 6: 57; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 112, n. 7: 138; FNR. vol. I: 153; TBR¹: 205, 218; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Ma'âlî umûri-himâ*: 448; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 3: 238, n. 4: 238-239, n. 8: 240-241, n. 10: 241, n. 26: 250-251, vol. XLIII, bb. 22, n. 3: 134, bb. 11, nn. 3-4: 238-239, n. 8: 240-241, n. 10: 241, n. 40: 257, vol. CI, bb. 4, n. 18: 110). The second strand, commonly carried by the Sunnî (although almost always without reference to an angelic visitation) has Muhammad questioning 'Alî about the name he has given to his son and, upon discovering that 'Alî has named him 'Harb', changes it to al-Husayn (among the Shî'a, cf. SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 5: 25; FNR. vol. I: 153; TBR¹: 218; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Ma'âlî umûri-himâ*: 448; MJL. vol. XXXIX: 62, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 4: 238, n. 28: 251, n. 33: 254. Among the Sunnî, cf. for example HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 569: 211-212, n.

him and caring for him. Thus, concludes Muhammad positively, some of his limbs will indeed be found in the house of Umm Ayman. At al-Husayn's birth, the text continues, Umm Ayman prepares the child and swaddles him in his father's garment:⁴⁰⁴ for al-Husayn, unlike Fâtima, there are no heavenly midwives, no washing in the water of *al-Kanṭhar* and no garments of Paradise in which he is enveloped.

In the midst of all these Traditions of Fâtima conceiving and giving birth to al-Husayn, some transmitters insert an arcane Tradition, worth examining only for its novelty. It concerns a banished angel, by name of Futrus,⁴⁰⁵ who yearns to accompany Jibrîl,

953: 251). There are also a number of curious Traditions found in the Shī'a texts: one insists that al-Husayn is given a derivative of his brother al-Hasan's name because he is 'better' than al-Hasan (cf. RTB¹: 20; SDQ⁶. n. 7: 57; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 112, n. 10: 138; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Ma'âlî umûri-himâ*: 448; MJL. vol. LXIII, bb. 11, n. 12: 242, n. 28: 251): another holds that al-Husayn's name is 'cleft' from that of al-Hasan (cf. MJL. vol. LXIII, bb. 11, n. 11: 241-242), although this contradicts a Tradition we have already examined in which God claims to have cleft for al-Husayn a name from the Divine names. A further strand, in which 'Alî's relation to Muhammad is compared with Hârûn's relation to Mûsâ, Jibrîl commands that 'Alî's two children be named after the children of Hârûn – Shabbâr and Shabbîr. "My tongue is Arabic," complains Muhammad, not understanding the names, and Jibrîl translates them as al-Hasan and al-Husayn. Cf. QHL.: 705; RTB²: 174; SDQ¹. n. 3: 134, 191, 439; SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 5: 25; SDQ⁶. n. 6: 57; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 116, n. 6: 138; FNR. vol. I: 123, 153; TBR¹: 160, 218; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Ma'âlî umûri-himâ*: 448; RWD¹. vol. I: 345; TST³: 382; MJL. vol. IX, bb. 2: 298, vol. XIII, bb. 11, n. 11: 331; vol. XXXVI, bb. 50, n. 4: 36, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50: 37, 92, vol. XXXVIII, bb. 63: 190, vol. XXXIX, bb. 72: 33, 62, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 1: 237, nn. 3-4: 238, n. 10: 241, n. 29: 245, vol. XLIX, bb. 4: 77, vol. XCIX, bb. 8: 191, vol. CI, bb. 4, n. 18: 110; NTR. vol. I, bb. 8, n. 7-1163: 461, vol. XV, bb. 32, n. 7-17805: 144. Al-Majlisî carries yet another strand, in which 'Alî names his sons Hamza (al-Hasan) and Ja'far (al-Husayn), but changes them at Muhammad's order (MJL. vol. LXIII, bb. 11, n. 28: 251, n. 33: 254-255).

⁴⁰⁴ SDQ¹. n. 1: 82; FNR. vol. I: 154; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 15: 242-243.

⁴⁰⁵ Possibly a corruption of 'Butrus' (Peter). Al-Majlisî carries one account of this same Tradition in which the angel is named Salsâ'il (MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 47: 258-259).

en route to Muhammad, and who has recourse to Muhammad's intercessory powers to realize his desire:

"When al-Husayn was born God ordered Jibra'il to descend with a crowd of angels to congratulate Muhammad. He descended and passed an island on which was an angel called Futrus. God had sent him to do something, but he had delayed, and God broke his wings and cast him on that island, where he had served God for seven hundred years. He said: Jibra'il, where are you going? He said: To Muhammad. Futrus said: Carry me with you to Muhammad: perhaps he would pray for me. When Jibra'il came to the Prophet and informed him of the situation of Futrus, the Prophet said to him: Tell him to rub his wings against this child. Futrus rubbed against the cradle of al-Husayn, and at once God restored his wings. Then he ascended with Jibra'il to Heaven and was named the liberated slave of al-Husayn."⁴⁰⁶

The story serves to underscore the miraculous power of the baby al-Husayn, although he is very much the passive agent in this power, thus distinguishing him, for example, from the child Jesus of the Apocryphal Gospels,⁴⁰⁷ who performs miracles himself.

⁴⁰⁶ RTB¹.: 79; RTB².: 219; QQM. bb. 20, n. 1: 140-141; SDQ¹. n. 8: 137; FNR. vol. I: 155; RWD¹. vol. I: 252; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fī āyātī-hi ba'da nafātī-hi*: 63; TST³.: 698; AML. vol. II, n. 5: 179 (not in the context of al-Husayn's birth); KFM¹.: 543; KFM².: 185; MJL. vol. XXVI, bb. 8, n. 10: 340, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 18: 243, n. 27: 250, vol. XLIV, bb. 25, n. 7: 182, L, bb. 3, n. 47: 66, vol. XCVIII, bb. 32, n. 9: 367; NTR. vol. X, bb. 86, n. 14-12271: 410.

⁴⁰⁷ Comprising a large number of documents, either whole or in fragments, these gospels, letters and revelations have been rejected by the Church, and thus do not find a place in the Canon of the Scriptures, as opposed to the four 'Canonical' Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). They contain countless details, many of them regarded as spurious, about Jesus, Mary and various Apostles. While the word 'apocryphal' has come to denote a text which is spurious or untrue, an 'apocryphal' book was, originally, a book deemed too sacred or esoteric to be in the hands of

A further strand in this genre of angelic activity, found in a particularly rare Tradition, recounts the orders given by God to the angels in Heaven to suitably celebrate the birth of a child for Muhammad:

“When al-Husayn b. ‘Alī was born...God, powerful and lofty, inspired Mâlik,⁴⁰⁸ keeper of the Fire, to subdue the fires for its people in honor of the child born to Muhammad: and He inspired Ridwân,⁴⁰⁹ keeper of the Gardens, to adorn the Gardens and to perfume them in honor of a child born to Muhammad on earth: and God, may He be blessed and exalted, inspired the maidens of Paradise to dress up and to visit each other in honor of a child born to Muhammad on earth: and God, powerful and lofty, inspired the angels to perform in ranks the glorification of God (*al-tasbîh*), the praise of God (*al-tahmîd*), the exaltation of God (*al-tamjîd*) and the proclamation that God is the greatest (*al-takbîr*) in honor of a child born to Muhammad on earth...”⁴¹⁰

The whole cosmological effect of al-Husayn’s birth is articulated here: in the Christian reading of the birth of Jesus, the angels rejoice, but their glorification is entirely centered upon God, while the cosmological effects of the Incarnation still lie in the future: conversely, the birth of al-Husayn has an immediate consequence for those in Heaven and Hell, a portend of his martyrdom, which the Shi‘a envisage as a ‘cosmic’ event, touching all of human his-

the common believer, reserved instead for the hands of the initiate or inner circle, suggesting a strong Gnostic trait.

⁴⁰⁸ Traditionally, the keeper of Hell, named in Q. 43: 77. Pickthall translates this as ‘master’, but by all accounts, it is a proper name. Cf. Murata, S. “The Angels.” In *Islamic Spirituality. Foundations*, edited by S.H. Nasr, 325. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997.

⁴⁰⁹ The angel who looks after Paradise, possibly alluded to in Q. 9: 21 and 57: 20. Cf. Murata, S. “The Angels”: 325.

⁴¹⁰ SDQ². vol. I, bb. 24, n. 36: 282; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 24: 248.

tory, of nature and of the universe. Ayoub offers a longer, more detailed transmission of this Tradition from Darbandî,⁴¹¹ in which the mystical tree of Paradise, Tûbâ, is ordered freely to disperse its fruits of precious stones and life-giving, healing leaves (an image that resonates strongly with the life-giving and medicinal trees prophesied in Ez. 47: 12). The angels, youths (of whom al-Hasan and al-Husayn will be declared the masters by Muhammad) and maidens of Paradise are permitted to gather these in celebration.⁴¹²

Numerous other accounts of angelic intervention are widely diffused throughout the books of Tradition.⁴¹³ A final, and rare Tradition, is quoted by Ayoub, who takes it from al-Bahrânî,⁴¹⁴ although it is also extant in al-Râwandî and al-Majlisî. This Tradition is markedly different from all the others precisely in that in all the others, it is Muhammad who receives the angelic announcements of the birth and forewarning of the death: he then passes this information on to Fâtima (in itself a paradox, for at other moments of her life, such as in her grief at her father's death, angels do speak to her). In the Tradition that follows, it is Fâtima who is the recipient of an angelic visitation, although no words are actually spoken to her by the angels, and it is for Muhammad to interpret the meaning for her. "I see a light shining on your face," he says to his daughter, in a leitmotif of light we have examined at length, à propos her pre-existence, her purity and the future Imâms who spring from her, "you shall give birth to a proof (*hujja*) of God over this creation." The following Tradition is narrated by Fâtima herself:

"At the end of the first month of my pregnancy, I felt a fever in my womb, and told my father. He called for a pitcher of water, spoke over it, spat into it, and said: Drink! So I drank it, and God banished what I was feeling. I reached the fortieth

⁴¹¹ Darbandî, M.Â. *Iksâr al-'ibâdât fî asrâr al-shahâdât*. Tehran: Dâr al-tibâ'ah, n.d.: 94ff.

⁴¹² Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. 74.

⁴¹³ Cf. for example RTB²: 189; SDQ². vol. I, bb. 24, n. 36: 282; SDQ⁶. n. 6: 57; SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 116, n. 7: 138; TST⁶: 13; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 3: 238, n. 8: 240, n. 24: 248, vol. L, bb. 3, n. 43: 66.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. 71-72.

day and I felt a crawling on my back, like the crawling of ants between the skin and the garment, which did not cease until the completion of the second month, when I felt a restiveness and movement and, by God, the child had already started to move in my womb. I had no need for food and drink: God preserved me from them, as though I had drunk a largess of milk, until the completion of the third month, when I felt bounty and increase in my house. When I reached the fourth month, God caused him to keep me company in my loneliness: I stayed in the mosque, not leaving it except when I need to purify myself. I was increasing and nimble, exteriorly and interiorly, until I completed the fifth month. When I entered the six month, I did not need a lamp on the darkest night: and when I was by myself in my prayer niche, I could hear the glorification (*tashîh*) and sanctification (*taqdîs*) of God in my womb. At the conclusion of nine days in the sixth month I increased in strength but was lacking in joy, and I mentioned this to Umm Salama, and through her God fortified my strength. At the completion of the tenth day of the sixth month I was sleeping, and there came to me in my sleep one who rubbed his wings against my back: I was alarmed, and arose, performed the ritual washing and prayed two prostrations. Then I slept again, and there came to me in my sleep one garbed in white, who sat at my head and blew in my face and on my neck. I arose, fearful, performed the ritual washing and prayed four prostrations. Then I slept again, and there came to me in my sleep one who made me sit up and made incantations over me and prayed God's protection over me. In the morning I awoke: it was the day of blessed Umm Salama. A dove entered (my) robes. I came to Umm Salama, and the Prophet looked at my face, and I saw joy on his face. All that I had experienced lifted from me and I recounted it to the Prophet. He said: Re-

joice! As regards the first, he is my friend 'Izrâ'il,⁴¹⁵ guardian and opener of the wombs of women: as regards the second, he is my friend Mikâ'il,⁴¹⁶ guardian of the wombs of the people of my house. Did he blow on you? I said, yes! She said: then he held me to himself and said: Regarding the third, he is my brother Jibra'il, to whom God has given care of your child. I returned and delivered him at the completion of the sixth month."⁴¹⁷

Once more we have before us a Tradition that is so suffused with symbolic details that one might easily miss crucial elements: one of the more important here is that al-Husayn praised God while still in his mother's womb.⁴¹⁸ This ties him to his mother, who ad-

⁴¹⁵ The angel of death and sometimes angel of the last trumpet. He is alluded to but unnamed in Q. 32: 11 and, by tradition, is so overcome by grief when he looks into Hell, that the earth risks being flooded by his tears. Cf. Wensinck, A.J. "Izrâ'il." In *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by H.A.R. Gibb et al., 190. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.

⁴¹⁶ The angel named in Q. 2: 98. By tradition, he has never laughed since the creation of Hell, and weeps for pity over sinners, imploring God's mercy for them. Cf. Wensinck, A.J. "Mikâl." In *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by H.A.R. Gibb et al., 378-379. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.

⁴¹⁷ RWD¹. vol. II: 841; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 12, n. 39: 272-273.

⁴¹⁸ The element of al-Husayn speaking in the womb links him at once to a Qur'anic theme ('Îsâ speaking as an infant) as well as to his mother Fâtima, who spoke in the womb of Khadîja. Speaking while still in the womb is posited both of Fâtima and of al-Husayn, but is not so clearly posited of 'Îsâ. Q. 19: 24-26 contains a curious dialogue that bears some investigation. The verses read: «*Then (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not! Thy Lord hath placed a rivulet beneath thee, And shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee, So eat and drink and be consoled. And if thou meetest any mortal, say: Lo! I have vowed a fast unto the Beneficent, and may not speak this day to any mortal.*» This is Pickthall's interpretation of the verses: he adds the word 'one' in brackets, although not only is this not in the Arabic, but the Arabic (*fa-nâdâ-hâ*) in essence reads: «*Then he cried out to her...*». This 'he' is hard to identify, and other English translations exhibit the difficulty of rendering the Arabic into English. «*But (a voice) cried unto her from beneath the (palm tree)...* » is Ali's attempt, although 'a voice' and 'palm tree' are not in the Arabic. Arberry tries «*But the one that*

dressed words to her mother whilst still a fetus, as well as to the Christian reading of John the Baptist's gestation, during which he recognized the presence of Jesus (in the womb of Mary) and leapt for joy in his mother's womb⁴¹⁹ with a precocious spiritual awareness that in this Tradition is predicated of al-Husayn.

The mention of the dove in the text is somewhat problematic: neither al-Râwandî nor al-Majlisî is clear in his transmission concerning whose robe it was the dove entered (*fa-dakhalat fi thawbi hamâmat*). It may be a misprint, and ought to read *thawbî* ("my robe"). Ayoub clarifies that the dove entered the robe of Fâtima while she was at the house of Umm Salama.⁴²⁰

This is al-Husayn, born, already cleaned and purified by God,⁴²¹ of the virgin Fâtima and touched, as a newborn child, by the wings of Jibrîl.⁴²² Her immeasurable grief begins already in her pregnancy, goaded by the knowledge that her son will be murdered. In his conception and birth al-Husayn brings distress and heartbreak, a reality encapsulated in a peculiar story, transmitted by the Sunnî historian al-Baghdâdî and by a few of the later Shî'a transmitters:

was below her called to her...» (the second 'her' in the Arabic could refer either to Maryam or to the palm tree, i.e. the call was from below Maryam or from below the palm tree); Palmer renders it «*he called to her from beneath her...*», which is a precise translation of the Arabic as it stands. Palmer adds a footnote that the 'he' refers either to the infant himself or to Gabriel. 'Abd al-Haleem translates «*a voice cried to her from below...*» and Bell as «*Then he called to her from beneath her...*», adding a footnote that posits the 'he' is probably the child. If, as Palmer and Bell note, the voice could be the voice of the child, the question is whether he is speaking from the womb or from a place at the foot of the tree, where he lies, newly born. In their most literal reading, the context of the verses suggests from the womb, since they are describing the labor of Maryam. Conversely, many scholars regard the voice to be that of the infant newly-born, who will speak again as an infant a few verses later (Q. 19: 30), while others hold it to be the voice of Jibrîl, still guiding Maryam.

⁴¹⁹ Lk. 1: 41, 44.

⁴²⁰ Cf. Ayoub, *M. Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. 72.

⁴²¹ *Allâhu qad nazzâfa-hu wa-tabhara-hu*. Cf. SDQ¹. n. 5: 136; FNR. vol. I: 155; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 16: 243, n. 24: 256.

⁴²² MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 27: 250.

“I was with the Prophet: on his left thigh he had his son Ibrâhîm and on his right thigh al-Husayn b. ‘Alî. He was kissing, now the one, now the other, when Jibrîl descended to him with revelation from the Lord of the worlds. When he had gone from him, he said: Jibrîl came to me from my Lord and said: Muhammad, your Lord greets you with peace, and says to you that you cannot have both of them. Ransom one of them for his companion. The Prophet looked at Ibrâhîm and wept, and looked at al-Husayn and wept. Then he said: the mother of Ibrâhîm is a slave, and when he dies, no one will grieve for him except me. But the mother of al-Husayn is Fâtima and his father is ‘Alî, son of my uncle, my flesh and blood, and when he dies my daughter will grieve, and so will ‘Alî and so will I. I prefer my grief to theirs. Jibrîl, take Ibrâhîm: and he ransomed (al-Husayn) with Ibrâhîm. He said: he died after three days, and whenever the Prophet saw al-Husayn coming, he kissed him, and hugged to him to his chest, and sucked his teeth and said: I have ransomed the one I have ransomed with my son Ibrâhîm.”⁴²³

Fâtima will grieve for him throughout her life, and persist in her sorrow after death, where her tears, on the Day of Resurrection, become an anguished plea that God should punish her son’s murderers and all who in any way injure the ‘people of the house’. It is to this sorrow and these tears, so characteristic of the piety of Shî‘a Islam, that we must now turn.

⁴²³ Among the Sunnî, cf. BGD. vol. II, n. 635: 254. Among the Shî‘a, cf. SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî al-mufradât min manâqibi-hî*: 88-89; TST². vol. I, n. 289: 202; HLL¹: 256; HLL². 321; AHS. vol. IV, n. 127: 92; MJL. vol. XXII, bb. 1, n. 5: 153, vol. XLIII, bb. 12, n. 2: 261.

4 THE MOTIF OF GRIEF AND SUFFERING IN THE LIFE OF FÂTIMA AMONG THE ‘PEOPLE OF THE HOUSE’

Throughout the Shî‘a corpus, and particular in texts like al-Sadûq’s *Sifât al-shî‘a* and *Fadâ’il al-shî‘a*, the Shî‘a are singled out by and portrayed in terms of precise characteristics and marks, all of which indicate a life that is grim and sorrowful. Their faces are wane and pale from prolonged vigils of prayer at night; their stomachs are empty as a result of fasting and the remembrance of God; their mouths are dry from unremitting prayer. They are a people covered with the dust of the submissive, emaciated, slender and wasted; their backs bent from standing in prayer, their faces ashen and their eyes unfocused from their fear of God and from incessant weeping. Worship has disquieted their faces, long nights of prayer have worn them down and the heat of the midday sun has taken its toll on their bodies.⁴²⁴ They grieve, while all around them people are happy:

⁴²⁴ KLY. vol. II, bk. 5 (*Kitâb al-îmân wa-l-kufr*), bb. *al-Mu’min wa ‘alâmâtî-hi*, nn. 7, 10: 233; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 40: 444; SDQ⁹. bb. 18: 279, bb. 19: 280, bb. 20: 282, bb. 24: 286, bb. 33: 292-293, bb. 40: 310; SDQ¹⁰. bb. 20: 417; MFD¹. vol. I: 237; TFA². bb. 8, n. 27-377: 216, bb. 23, n. 3-1189: 576; FNR. vol. II: 294; SHB. vol. II, bb. *al-Musâbaqa bi-l-yaqîn wa-l-sabr*: 138; HDI. vol. V: 120, vol. VII, bb. 120: 291; TST¹. bb. 9, n. 156: 66; IRB. vol. I: 100; KFM².: 333; HRR¹. vol. I, bb. 20, n. 203: 86, n. 205: 87, n. 214: 90, n. 218: 96, vol. II, bb. 11, n. 7700: 191, vol. V, bb. 5, n. 8997: 157, vol. XV, bb. 4, n. 20242: 189; MJL. vol. XXVII, bb. 4, n. 155: 144, vol. XXXIII, bb. 23, n. 597: 362, vol. XLI, bb. 99, n. 4: 4, vol. LIII: 222, vol. LXIV, bb. 12: 248, vol. LXV, bb. 19, n. 2: 149, nn. 4-5: 150-151, n. 30: 169, n. 32: 176, n. 34: 177, n. 40: 186, n. 43: 188, vol. LXVI, bb. 37, n. 30: 308, vol. LXXIV, bb. 15, n. 30: 404, vol. LXXV, bb. 15, n. 91: 26, vol. XCII, bb. 129, n. 27: 379, 381. Cf. also DAY. vol. I: 107, 144.

“Their eyes are tear-filled, many their tears, many their prayers, many their supplications. They recite the Book of God, and when people are happy, they are grieving.”⁴²⁵

The whole fabric of Shī'a piety is colored by an intense and harrowing grief and lamentation, open and unabashed, for “God loves every grieving heart.”⁴²⁶ It is a sorrow compounded by a number of factors: the usurpation of their power at the very beginning, the unwavering refusal to accord 'Alī and the Imāms their rightful place, the ill-treatment of Fâtima and the members of her family, and the persecution of those faithful to the ‘people of the house’ as a constant through Islamic history. Notwithstanding all of these factors, the grief of the Shī'a finds its culmination and summit in the death of al-Husayn on the field of Karbalâ' – the very name means ‘land of sorrow and calamity’ – and it is the Karbalâ' event by which the grief is articulated and finds physical interpretation. All the suffering and grief of the ‘people of the house’ converges in the solitary figure of al-Husayn, and all subsequent pain and sorrow is nothing more than a way of participating in his own grief. This shared, communal grief is not solely an internal sadness, but is expressed in rites and ritual actions by which the Karbalâ' event is revisited and made present. Karbalâ' is an event that slips beyond the sentries of time and space, giving it a timelessness which allows Shī'a communities to gauge themselves against the example of al-Husayn in the fight against any injustice.⁴²⁷ Concurrently, these rites

⁴²⁵ SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 40: 444; SDQ⁹. bb. 19: 281, bb. 40: 310; FNR. vol. II: 294; MJL. vol. LXV, bb. 19, n. 30: 169.

⁴²⁶ KLY. vol. II, bk. 5 (*Kitâb al-îmân wa-l-kufr*), bb. *al-Shukr*, n. 30: 99; HDI. vol. II: 193; HRR¹. vol. VII, bb. 29, n. 8771: 76, vol. XVI, bb. 8, n. 21626: 310; MJL. vol. LXVIII, bb. 61, n. 25: 38, vol. LXX, bb. 125, n. 3: 157. Cf. also DAY. vol. I: 154.

⁴²⁷ Most particularly, participating each year (during the first ten days of the sacred month of *Muharram* and culminating on the tenth day, *ʿĀshûrâ*), in the rites and rituals that commemorate al-Husayn's martyrdom is motivated by the belief that such an activity will serve as succor to salvation on the Last Day. Al-Husayn represents atonement, and his redemptive martyrdom gives the possibility of salvation to all. The community expresses this notion of the vicarious suffering of the innocent al-Husayn (and all the ‘people of the house’) through the ceremonies of

are a physical manifestation which incorporate a far more comprehensive grief. The suffering of al-Husayn, writes Ayoub,

“has been taken by the Shi’a community to be a source of salvation through the interiorization and emulation of that suffering by the community...”⁴²⁸

A chief ingredient of this process of assimilation and imitation, according to the corpus of Shi’a Traditions, is weeping for his sufferings. This is a lament

“more concentrated and more extreme than any to be found elsewhere. No faith has ever laid greater emphasis on lament. It is the highest religious duty, and many times more meritorious than any other good work.”⁴²⁹

The high reward for this weeping, the salvific or redemptive⁴³⁰ quality in the chagrin of their devotees, is a recurrent theme run-

mourning. The foundation of the argument is that al-Husayn and the other Imâms sacrificed themselves for the Shi’a community, for Islam and indeed for all of mankind. Such sacrificial deaths have redemptive powers, which are rendered efficacious when the believers themselves take an active part in the suffering. Their suffering (particularly the grief that they express in varied ways and often in self-inflicted pain) becomes, in a sort of anamnesis, the suffering of Karbalâ’, for and with al-Husayn.

⁴²⁸ Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*: 15.

⁴²⁹ Chelkowski, P. “‘Ashura’”: 141-142.

⁴³⁰ Ayoub insists that there is no doctrine of redemption in Islam *per se*, although redemption plays a forceful role in the life of the community. At the same time he does admit that, while the theologically loaded Christian concept of ‘redemption’ remains Christian, and the Shi’a one remains Shi’a, there are common elements. In order to avoid confusion with the technical Christian conception, I have followed Ayoub’s definition of redemption as ‘fulfillment through suffering’ or ‘the healing of existence’. In these terms, he sees redemption as a vital force through the acceptance and understanding of suffering. Nor would he be alone in suggesting that all suffering can be redemptive. Perhaps the crucial point is that those who share, through weeping and in various ways, in the suffering of the

ning through all the pertinent Traditions. This is expressed , for example, in a narrative coming from the sixth Imâm Ja'far al-Sâdiq:

“I heard Abû ‘Abd Allâh⁴³¹ saying: The sighs of the sorrowful for us, distress for the wrong done us, is glorification of God, his sorrow for our affair is worship, and his concealment of our secret is a striving in the path of God. Muhammad b. Sa’îd said to me: Write this in gold! You won’t write anything better than it!”⁴³²

Al-Husayn himself, third Imâm and ‘chief of martyrs’, articulates this phenomenon: “I am the martyr of tears” he proclaims, “and no believer will remember me except that he will weep.”⁴³³ For those who do remember and weep, is held out the promise of Paradise:

“On the authority of al-Husayn b. ‘Alî,⁴³⁴ who said: There is no servant whose eyes flow with tears for our sake, and whose eyes are wet with frequent weeping for our sake, except that by them, God will bring him to Paradise for an age.”

⁴³⁵

‘people of the house’ will benefit by their intercessory prerogatives. Cf. Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*: 15.

⁴³¹ The sixth Imâm.

⁴³² RTB²: 105, 257; KLY. vol. II, bk. 5 (*Kitâb al-îmân wa-l-kufûr*), bb. *al-Kitmân*, n. 16: 226; SDQ¹. bb. 4, n. 32-178: 115; MFD⁵. n. 3: 338; HRR¹. vol. XVI, bb. 34, n. 21485: 249; MJL. vol. II, bb. 13, n. 1: 64, bb. 19, n. 16: 147, vol. XLIV, bb. 34, n. 4: 278, vol. LXXII, bb. 45, n. 33: 83.

⁴³³ QQM. bb. 36, nn. 3, 6: 215-216; SDQ¹. n. 7: 137; FNR. vol. I: 170; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî maqtali-hi*: 95; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 34, n. 5: 279, n. 19: 284, vol. XCVIII, bb. 30, n. 1: 355; NTR. vol. X, bb. 49, n. 1-12072: 311.

⁴³⁴ The third Imâm, Abû ‘Abd Allâh al-Husayn b. ‘Alî (d. 59/680).

⁴³⁵ RTB²: 62; MFD⁵. n. 2: 340; TFA². bb. 4, n. 35-181: 116; HRR¹. vol. XIV, bb. 66, n. 19704: 507; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 34, n. 8: 279.

A comparable Tradition comes from ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, the fourth Imām and son of al-Husayn, who survived Karbalā’ only because he was too ill to fight. He was to become a model for all who would have fought with al-Husayn had they been able⁴³⁶ and a paragon of weeping and lament – the Traditions tell us that he wept for between twenty and forty years, and never was food placed before him but the tears flowed.⁴³⁷ More than anyone, it was the fourth Imām who set the tone of grief and encouraged weeping as a form of participation in Karbalā’ for all the adherents of the ‘people of the house’. For every believer who weeps copiously for the sufferings of the ‘people of the house’, Zayn al-‘Ābidīn pledged a dwelling place for countless ages in the mansions of Paradise, while for those who suffer injury for the sake of the ‘people of the house’ and weep for it, he promised that God will remove all their pain and protect them from His wrath and from the Fire.⁴³⁸

This *leitmotif* of grief and lament does not start on the day of Karbalā’, nor is it exclusively a result of its aftermath: it resonates deeply in the Traditions and pious stories of the prophets, each of whom shared in the anguish of the ‘people of the house’ by weeping in anticipation over al-Husayn long before the Karbalā’ event. When Ādam was given the names of the ‘holy five’ by which to pray, he was overwhelmed with anguish at the fifth name, that of al-Husayn, and in his tears, turned to Jibrīl for an explanation:

⁴³⁶ ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn was too ill to take part in the fighting and was thus among the survivors captured after the battle. While some Traditions would offer us a picture of the youngster having to be restrained from staggering sickly onto the battlefield to fight with his father, his non-participation is a more important model for the contemporary community. Given the opportunity, the boy would have fought. Thus do the members of the faithful community participate in the sufferings of al-Husayn, believing that they too would have fought alongside him had the opportunity been given them.

⁴³⁷ QQM. bb. 35, n. 1: 213; SDQ¹. n. 5: 140; SDQ⁴. vol. I, n. 15: 272, vol. II, n. 4: 517; FNR. vol. I: 170, vol. II: 450; TBR³: 315; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fī karami-hi wa-sabri-hi*: 179; IRB. vol. I: 498; HRR¹. vol. III, bb. 87, n. 3655: 280, vol. XI, bb. 51, n. 15489: 542; MJL. vol. XII, bb. 9, n. 27: 264, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 1: 155, vol. XLVI, bb. 5, n. 19: 61, bb. 6, nn. 1-3: 108-109, vol. LXXI, bb. 16, n. 33: 86; NTR. vol. II, bb. 74, n. 18-6479: 465.

⁴³⁸ Cf. QQM. bb. 32, n. 1: 201; TST⁶: 9; HRR¹. vol. XIV, bb. 66, n. 19692: 501; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 34, n. 13: 281, n. 21: 285.

“He said: My brother Jibra’îl, in the remembrance of the fifth my heart is broken and my tears flow. Jibra’îl said: This son of yours will be stricken by a calamity besides which all calamities will pale. He said: My brother, what is it? He said: He will be killed thirsty, a stranger and as one all alone, with no helper...Âdam and Jibra’îl wept tears, as a mother bereaved for her child.”⁴³⁹

All the prophets who succeed Âdam share in these tears: Nûh, whose very name means ‘to lament’, weeps over one of the nails brought him by Jibrîl for the construction of the ark, for unlike the other nails, it causes him gloom and anguish.⁴⁴⁰ Ibrâhîm is informed of the impending tragedy and weeps, while his son Ismâ’îl is informed of it by his sheep, who refuse to graze at Karbalâ’. ‘Îsâ learns of it from a group of gazelles sitting in lamentation near the place of al-Husayn’s death.⁴⁴¹ Zakariyyâ’, father of Yahyâ, is taught the five names and laments over the fifth.

The lament is not restricted to human beings. The Shî’a regard the death of al-Husayn as a ‘cosmic’ event, touching all of human history, of nature and of the universe. The entire history (and even pre-history) of the world revolves around the Divinely preordained Karbalâ’ event. It was with the Imâms that the primordial history of creation began, and with them it will be judged and consummated. In the interim, all of humankind and the whole of creation participate in the lament over al-Husayn’s death. The Shî’a insist that all creation, the sky, the earth, the angels, the *jinn*, the birds and all beasts weep and grieve over al-Husayn.

The angels, as noted, played a significant role in the annunciation and birth of al-Husayn, as well as in the harrowing predictions of his death. Now, they join their lament to the tears of the

⁴³⁹ MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 44: 245.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. Op. cit. vol. XI, bb. 3, n. 49: 328, vol. XXVI, bb. 7, n. 14: 332, vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 12: 230.

⁴⁴¹ SDQ¹. n. 5: 597; SDQ². vol. II, bb. 47: 531, bb. 48: 532; RWD¹. vol. III: 1143; MJL. vol. XIV, bb. 18, n. 56: 258, vol. XVII, bb. 6: 257, vol. XLIV, bb. 31, n. 2: 252, vol. LII, bb. 25: 201.

Shī'a, standing watch in tears over his tomb until the Day of Resurrection, as articulated in a widely-diffused Tradition:

“Forty thousand angels descended, wanting to fight with al-Husayn b. ‘Alī, but they were not permitted to fight, and when they returned to seek permission and descended again, al-Husayn had been killed. Now, at his tomb, disheveled and in dust, they weep until the Day of Resurrection, and their leader is an angel said to be al-Mansûr.”⁴⁴²

Like ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Âbidīn, the angels were prevented from fighting alongside al-Husayn, so that, like ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Âbidīn, their ensuing participation in his suffering is expressed in their lament and tears. Those who surrounded the dead al-Husayn wept with extreme anguish, while others supplicated God in Heaven for him.⁴⁴³

The *jinn* too mourn with disturbing songs and poems:

“The *jinn* wept for al-Husayn b. ‘Alī, saying: What will you say when the Prophet says to you: What have you done, you, the last of the generations, to the people of my house, my brothers, my noble traits, from between my ascending and my killing, you were stained with blood.”⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² RTB¹: 71, 243; KLY. vol. IV, bk. 15 (*Kitâb al-hajj*), bb. *al-Nawâdir*, nn. 6-8: 587-589; NUM. bb. 19, nn. 4-5: 309-310; QQM. bb. 27, n. 2: 171-172, bb. 77, n. 1: 349-350; SDQ¹. n. 5: 129, n. 7: 238; SDQ². vol. II, bb. 58, n. 22: 671; SDQ³. vol. II, n. 3203; SDQ⁵. vol. I, bb. 28, n. 58: 299; TFA¹. vol. VI, n. 21: 116; TST³: 544; KFM¹: 490; KFM²: 275; HRR¹. vol. XIV, bb. 37, 19476: 409, n. 19501: 420, n. 19505: 421, n. 19523: 427, bb. 45, n. 19586: 453; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 34, n. 23: 275, vol. XLV, bb. 41, n. 2: 220, n. 8: 222, nn. 10-15: 222-223, n. 21: 226, vol. LVI, bb. 27, n. 30: 325, n. 38: 328, vol. XCVIII, bb. 1, n. 29: 7, bb. 5, n. 60: 40, bb. 9, n. 16: 55, bb. 14, n. 9: 102; NTR. vol. X, bb. 26, n. 23-11933: 242, n. 29-11939: 245, n. 3-11963: 257, n. 3-12155: 349.

⁴⁴³ QQM. bb. 28, n. 23: 187; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî âyâtî-hi ba'da mafâtî-hi*: 70; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 41, n. 19: 226.

⁴⁴⁴ QQM. bb. 29, n. 6: 193; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 43, n. 4: 230.

In his *Kâmil al-ziyârât*, al-Qummî dedicates a complete chapter to the lament of the *jinn* for al-Husayn.⁴⁴⁵ These consist of concise, pithy verses, always put by al-Qummî in the mouth of the *jinn*, a number of which are transmitted on the authority of Umm Salama.⁴⁴⁶ Al-Qummî remarks in a footnote that these Traditions are to be found in other works – specifically, al-Sadûq in his *Kitâb al-amâlî*, Ibn Shahrâshûb in his *Manâqib âl Abî Tâlib* and al-Majlisî in his *Bihâr al-anwâr*. While this is essentially true, these transmitters do not always put these laments in the mouth of the *jinn*. Sometimes they do:⁴⁴⁷ but many of these same transmitters narrate identical verses, but this time put into the mouths of humans: on occasion Zaynab bt. ‘Aqîl⁴⁴⁸ or ‘Alî Zayn al-Âbidîn⁴⁴⁹ or an unnamed poet or spokesperson.⁴⁵⁰ Al-Qummî notes further that these

⁴⁴⁵ QQM. bb. 28, n. 23: 187, bb. 29, nn. 1-10: 189-197.

⁴⁴⁶ “I heard the *jinn* lamenting over al-Husayn,” Umm Salama is reported to have said, and, in another version: “Since the death of the Prophet, I never heard the lament of the *jinn* except at night...” What did Umm Salama hear on the night air? It is not unreasonable to imagine that she heard what a number of others reported having heard: unidentified voices crying out in lament in the night. Cf. for e.g. AKR. vol. XIV, bb. 1566: 242 for a Tradition in which similar lamentation poetry is put into the mouth of “a caller who cried out at night.” Cf. also MFD⁵. n. 7: 350; TBR². vol. II: 305; TFA². bb. 3, n. 50-131: 91; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî âyâtî-hi ba’dâ wafâtî-hi*: 69-70; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 37: 378, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 147, bb. 43: 236-237, bb. 44: 276 for similar accounts of unidentified speakers.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. for e.g. SDQ¹. n. 2: 139; FNR. vol. I: 170; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Ma’âlî umûri-himâ*: 441, vol. IV, bb. *Fî âyâtî-hi ba’dâ wafâtî-hi*: 69-70; IRB. vol. II: 57; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 39: 147, n. 22: 174, bb. 43: 236-239, 241, vol. LX, bb. 2, n. 3: 65.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. for e.g. MFD¹. vol. II: 124; FNR. vol. I: 193; TST⁶.: 99; IRB. vol. II: 68; MJL. vol. XXXIX: 123.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. for e.g. MJL. vol. XXXIX: 123.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. for e.g. MFD⁵. n. 7: 350; TBR². vol. II: 305; TFA². bb. 3, n. 50-131: 91; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî maqtali-hi*: 115; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 37: 378, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 147, bb. 43: 236-237, bb. 44: 276. One of these verses is a lament heard by an unknown voice, crying out in Medina: “You who ignorantly killed Husayn, rejoice in torment and torture! All the people of Heaven invoke evil upon you, among prophet and messenger and those killed in battle! You are cursed by the tongue of Ibn Dâwûd and Mûsâ and the companion of the gospel.” (Cf. QQM. bb. 69: 196; MFD¹. vol. II: 125; FNR. vol. I: 193; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî âyâtî-hi ba’dâ wafâtî-hi*: 70-71; TST⁶.:

Traditions are also to be found in some of the Sunnî authors, such as Ibn ‘Asâkir⁴⁵¹ and al-Haythamî.⁴⁵² The Shî‘a author of *The Revolution of al-Husayn. Its Impact on the Consciousness of Muslim Society* is critical of these verses placed into the mouths of the *jinn*, suggesting that they are in fact written by individuals who wanted to be part of al-Husayn’s ‘revolution’, but preferred to remain anonymous for fear of the authorities.⁴⁵³ But this is not finally the point: these Traditions aim at clarifying the death of al-Husayn as a cosmic event, impinging upon every creature, and even inanimate creation, so that every creature, without exception, participates in a universal lament.⁴⁵⁴

99; IRB. vol. II: 69; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 34: 241, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 123, bb. 39, n. 29: 199, bb. 43, nn. 2-3: 235-236, n. 6: 238). Ayoub notes that the voice heard lamenting in Medina was presumed to be an angel or the ancient prophet al-Khidr (cf. Ayoub, M. Redemptive Suffering in Islam: 136. In fact, a the majority of texts place this verse into the mouth of an unknown speaker. Ibn Shahrâshûb declares that this verse is from the lament of the angels (SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî âyâtî-bi ba’da nafâtî-bi*: 70-71).

⁴⁵¹ AKR. vol. XIV, bb. 1566: 240-242, mostly on the authority of Umm Salama.

⁴⁵² HAY. vol. IX: 199, narrating the experience of Umm Salama as well as of Maymûna.

⁴⁵³ “In the literature of lamentation for al-Husayn, there has arisen an element known as the poetry of the Jinn in lamentation for al-Husayn...it seems to us that most of this poetry is by unknown human poets who wanted to spread propaganda on behalf of the revolution and who wanted to take part in one of the cherished acts of piety without endangering themselves and exposing themselves to the punishment of the authorities. Therefore they composed these verses and attributed them to the Jinn. Perhaps some of this poetry was the work of the women who used to devote themselves to exclamations of grief at the women’s rites of remembrance for al-Husayn; they might have wanted to create wonder and amazement by attributing their exclamations of grief to creatures who were not human.” Cf. Howard, I.K.A, trans. *The Revolution of al-Husayn*: 88.

⁴⁵⁴ Ritual, by which one evokes and actualizes a past moment, making the present one with the past, evolves and changes: the manner in which Karbalâ’ is revived and relived is no exception. The memorial services have developed into politico-religious phenomena, profusely ritualistic, prized by the ardent participants. For the Imâms and their devotees who came after al-Husayn and who lived in fear and secrecy, there was little chance of insurrection. Weeping and other ways of remembrance soon

The universal lament is encapsulated by Traditions that tell of the weeping of the heavens and the earth.⁴⁵⁵ This weeping is predicted by ‘Alī b. Abī Tâlib, upon the foundation of Q. 44: 29:

“I heard the Commander of the Faithful speaking in a public square, and he recited this verse: «*And the heaven and the earth wept not for them, nor were they reprieved.*» Then al-Husayn came out to him from one of the doors of the mosque, and he said: Truly, this one will be killed, and the heaven and the earth will weep over him.”⁴⁵⁶

The Qur’anic citation serves to prove the capacity of the heavens and the earth to weep: in the context of this particular verse, they refuse to weep for the recalcitrant Egyptians. But for the righteous martyr al-Husayn, the Tradition of their weeping serves to incorporate all of creation. This cosmic grief is described in eschatological language: the skies, which last wept at the murder of Yahyâ,⁴⁵⁷ wept

developed into ‘commemorations’ (*majâlis*). These active memorials were often held in the home of the Imâm, until (especially after the ‘Abbâsids) their manifestation became more public (some leaders felt threatened by the display of popular piety and attempted to suppress such commemorations). These displays included poets singing dirges, parades, mourning dress, professional mourners and a liturgical basis supplied by the Imâm. The mourners chanted elegies, related Traditions and stories and read the martyrdom narratives, stirring up the grief. Poetry played an increasingly important role, with lamentation poetry stressing various themes (and sometimes conflicting with the Traditions). Many of the ‘cosmic’ reactions to al-Husayn’s death are highlighted by the poets, as are the sufferings of the rest of the ‘people of the house’.

⁴⁵⁵ KLY. vol. IV, bk. 15 (*Kitâb al-hajj*), bb. *Ziyârat qabr Abī ‘Abd Allâh al-Husayn*, n. 2: 575-576; SDQ¹. n. 5: 219; SDQ⁵. vol. I, bb. 28, n. 58: 299; BTQ. nn. 835-836: 405; TST². vol. I, n. 293: 203; TST³.: 544; HLL¹.: 257; KFM¹.: 741; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 34, n. 23: 285, vol. XCVIII, bb. 1, n. 22: 5.

⁴⁵⁶ QQM. bb. 28, n. 1: 179-180, n. 21: 186; MJL. vol. XIV, bb. 15, n. 6: 167, vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 1: 201, nn. 15-16: 209, n. 29: 212.

⁴⁵⁷ A number of Shi’a Traditions insist that the heavens and the earth have only ever wept for two people: for Yahyâ, son of Zakariyyâ, when he was murdered, and for al-Husayn at Karbalâ’. Cf. QQM. bb. 28, n. 4: 181, n. 6: 181, nn. 8-10: 182, nn. 11-12: 183, n. 15: 184, n. 22: 186, n. 27:

for forty days⁴⁵⁸ at the death of al-Husayn, raining down blood or red dust,⁴⁵⁹ turning the sky and earth to red,⁴⁶⁰ while the sun rose and set red, like a clot of blood.⁴⁶¹

Finally, as if to underscore this spectacle, the Shî'a books of Tradition pronounce that all created things – human beings, *jinn*, birds and wild beasts – join in the cosmic lament for al-Husayn. Already, this is witnessed in the weeping of the prophets – the sheep of Ismâ'il and the gazelles that weep in front of 'Îsâ. Together with the angels and *jinn*, the earth and the sky, al-Qummî devotes a chapter of his *Kâmil al-ziyârât* to this exhibition of grief.⁴⁶²

“On the authority of Abû Ja'far,⁴⁶³ who said:
Mankind, the *jinn*, the birds and the wild beasts

188; RWD³. bb. 3, n. 293: 220; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî maqtali-hi*: 61; MJL. vol. XIV, bb. 15, n. 7: 168, n. 25: 182, n. 27: 183, vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 2: 201, nn. 20-21: 210, nn. 23, 27: 211, n. 31: 213, vol. XCVIII, bb. 5, n. 44: 35. This strand of thought hearkens back to the Traditions that only two people have ever been born after six months in the womb: 'Îsâ (or, alternatively, Yahyâ) and al-Husayn and that like Yahyâ, nobody before al-Husayn received that name. These narratives serve to elevate al-Husayn above the ordinary run of people.

⁴⁵⁸ QQM. bb. 28, n. 6: 181, n. 10: 182-183, n. 20: 185-186; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî maqtali-hi*: 61; MJL. vol. XIV, bb. 15, n. 25: 182, vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 13: 206, n. 18: 210, n. 23: 211, n. 38: 215; NTR. vol. I, bb. 22, n. 1-952: 391, vol. X, bb. 49, n. 6-12077: 313. A number of transmitters hold that the angels too wept for a period of forty days: cf. QQM. bb. 26, n. 8: 167-169; MJL. vol. XIV, bb. 15, n. 25: 182, vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 13: 206, n. 45: 218; NTR. vol. X, bb. 49, n. 6-12077: 313.

⁴⁵⁹ QQM. bb. 28, n. 13: 183, n. 14: 183-184, n. 25: 188; BTQ. nn. 835-836: 405; TST². vol. I, n. 293: 203; HLL¹: 257; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 13: 206, n. 20: 217, n. 25: 211; NTR. vol. X, bb. 49, n. 6-12077: 313.

⁴⁶⁰ QQM. bb. 28, n. 4: 181, n. 9: 182; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî maqtali-hi*: 61-62; BTQ. n. 832: 405; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 21: 210, n. 31: 213, n. 38: 215.

⁴⁶¹ QQM. bb. 28, n. 6: 181, n. 7: 181-182, n. 10: 182-183, n. 18: 185, n. 19: 185-186; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 13: 206, n. 28: 212.

⁴⁶² QQM. bb. 26: 165-171.

⁴⁶³ The fifth Imâm, Abû Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Alî al-Bâqir (d. between 113/732 and 124/743)

wept over al-Husayn b. ‘Alî, until their tears welled forth.”⁴⁶⁴

The Traditions that tell of this great and universal lament are not, with rare exceptions, transmitted by the major Shî‘a transmitters. The vast majority of them are pious traditions recorded by al-Qummî, since his *Kâmil al-ziyârât* is primarily a handbook of spirituality. Al-Majlisî transmits from him, but as noted earlier, al-Majlisî is an encyclopedist: he gathers all the Traditions he can find, but pays scant attention to critical elaboration or grading. Nevertheless, the collective sorrow forms an indispensable part of the grief of the Shî‘a, and these stories and Traditions serve to accentuate Karbalâ’ as a cosmic event. Its cosmic proportions, and the collective grief, are encapsulated in a tradition from the sixth Imâm Ja‘far al-Sâdiq:

“Abû ‘Abd Allâh⁴⁶⁵ said: O Zurâra, Heaven wept blood over al-Husayn for forty mornings: the earth wept blackness for forty mornings: the sun wept for forty mornings with an eclipse and with redness: the mountains were dismembered and dispersed, and the oceans burst forth. The angels wept over al-Husayn for forty mornings, and there is not a woman among us who will use dye, anoint herself, color her eyes or comb her hair until the

⁴⁶⁴ QQM. bb. 26, n. 1: 165; MFD²: 144; SHB. vol. IV, bb. *Fî âyâtî-hi ba‘da najâti-hi*: 61-62; MJL. vol. XL, bb. 91, n. 117: 97, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 22: 184, bb. 40, n. 8: 205. Of these creatures, a special qualification is given to the birds: among other things, the doves, frightened by his death, supplicate God and curse the killers of al-Husayn (cf. KLY. vol. VI, bk. 27 (*Kitâb al-dawâjîn*), bb. *al-Hamâm*, n. 13: 547; QQM. bb. 30, nn. 1-3: 197-198; HRR¹. vol. XI, bb. 33, n. 15427: 519; MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 36, n. 19: 305, vol. XLV, bb. 40, nn. 32-33: 213; NTR. vol. VIII, bb. 26, n. 1-9455: 284). The owls lament and are stricken by his death: “Has any of you ever seen an owl during the day?” is the question put by the Tradition. The answer is in the negative, and the Tradition elucidates: “They never failed to shelter in built-up areas, but when al-Husayn was killed, they decided only to take shelter in deserted ruins. During the day they never stop fasting and grieving, until night covers them, and then they never cease to wait for al-Husayn until morning comes.” Cf. QQM. bb. 31, n. 1: 199; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 34: 213, vol. LXI, bb. 14, n. 1: 239.

⁴⁶⁵ The sixth Imâm.

head of ‘Ubayd Allâh b. Ziyâd,⁴⁶⁶ may God curse him, comes to us, nor will we cease weeping after him. My uncle, whenever he remembered him, wept until his eyes overflowed onto his beard, and to the point that whoever saw him wept in mercy for his tears. The angels around al-Husayn’s tomb weep, and the angels that are in the air and in Heaven weep for their tears, until (he) remembered the wrath of Hell against his killers. He said: the angels weep for him and bewail him, and burn with anger against his killers. And were there not on the earth one of the Proofs of God, the earth would be destroyed and those in it overturned: nor are the number of earthquakes increased until the approach of the hour. There is no eye dearer to God, no tear from an eye which has wept and shed tears over him, except that he is joined and helped by Fâtima and joined by the Messenger of God...”⁴⁶⁷

At the centre of this cosmic mourning are the ‘people of the house’, comprising Muhammad, Fâtima and the twelve Imâms, who have become the ‘house of sorrow’ (*bayt al-ahzân*). At the heart of this house stands Fâtima.

“All things weep in emulation of her tears, and the tears of the faithful here on earth are but a way of sharing in her sorrows and a means of bringing consolation to her broken heart.”⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ Governor of Kûfa and Basra at the time of al-Husayn’s death. In Shî’a piety, notes Ayoub, he has become the arch-symbol of evil and infidelity. Cf. Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. 100.

⁴⁶⁷ QQM. bb. 26, n. 8: 167-168; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 13: 206; NTR. vol. X, bb. 49, n. 6-12077: 313.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.: 144.

Over this house of sorrows, Fâtima reigns supreme as mistress of grief. Lammens is scathing, comparing her to 'Niobe',⁴⁶⁹ characterizing her "a sad creature, perpetually in mourning",⁴⁷⁰ wondering how the Shî'a attempted to make this "ghost of a wailing woman interesting"⁴⁷¹ and declaring that weeping was Fâtima's most "suitable role."⁴⁷² But Lammens has apparently not grasped the sublime theological significance of weeping asserted by the Shî'a, the context in which Fâtima's tears must be read.

What has been posited of Fâtima may by the same token be said of al-Husayn: for just as, at her approach, her siblings fade and vanish into history, so too, despite the Shî'a claim that her eldest son al-Hasan was himself murdered, the whole thrust of Fâtima's grief centres around the murder of al-Husayn. In reality, her grief, like the entire grief of the Shî'a, is inextricably tied to the life and death of this second son of hers: already forewarned of his death, she bears him in sorrow, and long dead before his murder at Karbalâ', she continues to grieve ceaselessly for him until the Day of Judgment. All the other injustices, grievances and sorrows that befell her merely intensified this singular and colossal grief.

Al-Majlisî devotes the seventh chapter of the forty-third volume of his work to the iniquity suffered by Fâtima. Fifty Traditions recount the injustices perpetrated against her, her tears, sorrow and grievances, her final sickness, death and the reason for her secret burial, and earnestly pray the curse of God on all who ill-treated her. Al-Majlisî begins by placing Fâtima on a sure footing. There are only five weepers,⁴⁷³ he claims:

⁴⁶⁹ Lammens, H. "Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad": 227. In Greek mythology, Niobe was the daughter of Tantalus. Her large brood of children was killed by Apollo and Artemis, and Niobe exhausted herself with weeping, becoming the symbol of grief and everlasting sorrow. Cf. Price, S. and Kearns, E, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Mythology*: 375.

⁴⁷⁰ Lammens, H. "Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad": 227.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.: 228.

⁴⁷² Ibid.: 241.

⁴⁷³ SDQ¹. n. 5: 140; SDQ⁴. vol. I, n. 15: 272; FNR. vol. I: 170, vol. II: 450; TBR³: 315; IRB. vol. I: 498; MJL. vol. XI, bb. 4, n. 2: 204, vol. XII, bb. 9, n. 27: 264, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 1: 155, vol. XLVI, bb. 6, n. 2: 109, vol. LXXIX, bb. 16, n. 33: 86; HRR¹. vol. III, bb. 87, n. 3655: 280. Cf. also al-DAY. vol. I: 95. Al-Majlisî transmits a strand from Ibn

1. Âdam, who wept over Paradise until his cheeks became like a valley;
2. Ya'qûb, who wept over his son Yûsuf until he lost his sight;⁴⁷⁴
3. Yûsuf, who wept so copiously in prison over his father Ya'qûb, that his annoyed fellow prisoners asked if he couldn't weep by day and keep silent by night, or vice versa;⁴⁷⁵
4. Fâtima, whose weeping over her father caused the irritated citizens of Medina to complain to 'Alî that they were unable to sleep on their beds for the noise she was making, so that she was forced to go to the tombs of the martyrs to weep;⁴⁷⁶
5. 'Alî Zayn al-'Âbidîn, the fourth Imâm and son of al-Husayn, who, as noted earlier, wept for twenty or forty years over the Kar-balâ' event, and who never failed to weep whenever food was placed before him.

Al-Majlisî then proceeds to demonstrate that the injustices and grievances over which Fâtima wept were no figment of her imagination, but were clearly predicted by her father:

“When death approached the Messenger of God, he wept until his beard was wet with tears. Some said to him: Messenger of God, why this weeping? He said: I am weeping for my progeny, and the evil that my community after me will do to them: it is as if I see my daughter Fâtima will be treated unjustly after me, and she will cry out ‘O father!’,”

Shahrâshûb's *Manâqib* which names eight weepers, adding Nûh, Shu'ayb and Dâwûd to the five already mentioned. Cf. SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 369; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 32: 39.

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. Q. 12: 84. The word 'whitened' in the text is a suggestion that all his weeping made him blind. Cf. also Q. 12: 93, 96, where this blindness is healed («and he became a seer once more») is healed by the torn and bloodied shirt of his son Yûsuf.

⁴⁷⁵ This anecdote is not in the Qur'anic account of Yûsuf's imprisonment, where his two fellow prisoners ask him to interpret their dreams (Q. 12: 35-42).

⁴⁷⁶ SDQ¹. n. 5: 140; SDQ⁴. vol. I, n. 15: 272; FNR. vol. I: 170; TBR³: 315; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 369; IRB. vol. I: 498; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 39: 32, bb. 7, n. 1: 155, n. 15: 177, n. 27: 196, vol. XLVI, bb. 6, n. 2: 109, vol. LXXIX, bb. 16, n. 33: 86. Cf. also DAY. vol. I: 95.

but not one of my community after me will look out for her. Fâtima, peace be upon her, heard this and wept. The Messenger of God said to her: My daughter, do not weep! She said: I am not weeping over what will be done to me after you, but I am weeping over your departure, Messenger of God..."⁴⁷⁷

In another Tradition, Muhammad addresses Fâtima directly with a grim warning:

"Fâtima came to the Messenger of God, who was in the agony of death. She leaned over him, weeping, and he opened his eyes and awoke. Then he said: My daughter, you are the tyrannized and the oppressed after me. Whoever harms you, harms me: whoever angers you, angers me: whoever gladdens you, gladdens me: whoever reverences you, reverences me: whoever turns from you, turns from me: whoever unites himself to you, unites himself to me: whoever snubs you, snubs me: whoever treats you justly, treats me justly: and whoever treats you unjustly, treats me unjustly..."⁴⁷⁸

The Shî'a texts take note of her weeping over a number of incidents and individuals: over the death over her mother Khadîja,⁴⁷⁹ over her marriage to 'Alî, over her hunger and poverty,⁴⁸⁰ at the

⁴⁷⁷ TFA². bb. 7, n. 18-316: 188; MJL. vol. XXVIII, bb. 2, n. 4: 41, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 2: 156.

⁴⁷⁸ IRB. vol. I: 497; MJL. vol. XXVIII, bb. 2, n. 34: 76, vol. XXXIV, bb. 35: 338, vol. XXXVI, bb. 41, n. 110: 288.

⁴⁷⁹ YQB. vol. II: 35; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 116: 404; RWD¹. vol. II: 529; MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 5, n. 6: 3, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 31: 27-28.

⁴⁸⁰ SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ'*: 319; MJL. vol. XXIV, bb. 36, n. 6: 99, vol. XLIII, bb. 5, n. 30: 120.

grave of her sister Zaynab⁴⁸¹ where Muhammad tried to comfort her, at the grave of her uncle Hamza, killed at Uhud⁴⁸² as well as over the death of Ja'far b. Abî Tâlib,⁴⁸³ husband of Asmâ' bt. 'Umayy, ⁴⁸⁴ who would play a key role in Fâtima's own sickness and death. Fâtima's grief over these events and individuals is a portent of things to come. Her father, the ill-treatment he received and the opposition he faced (recounted by the Sunnî transmitters⁴⁸⁵) as well as his imminent death, was a primary reason for Fâtima's tears. Many of the Traditions recount her visiting her father during the illness that would finally kill him, where he comforts her with promises that she will very soon follow him, and will be the first to do so.

But in spite of these promises, her grief at his death and in fear of a future without him is enormous: seeing his frailty, she is choked with tears, which stream down her cheeks. "How can I not weep, looking at your frailty?" she asks, as he attempts to comfort her sorrow and allay her fear of what is to come ("who will we have when you are gone?"), instructing her to trust in God and to be patient, as her fathers the prophets and her mothers, the wives of the prophets, were patient in tribulation.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸¹ Among the Sunnî, who say it was not Zaynab but Ruqayya, cf. HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Abd Allâh b. al-'Abbâs b. 'Abd al-Muttalib*, n. 3103: 717-718. Among the Shî'a, who say it was Zaynab, cf. RTB²: 273.

⁴⁸² RQM.: 197; SDQ³. vol. I, n. 537: 180; TFA¹. vol. I, bb. 23, n. 168: 465; HDI. vol. XV: 17; HRR¹. vol. III, bb. 55, n. 3468: 224; MJL. vol. XXXVI, bb. 41, n. 224: 352, vol. XLIII, bb. 4, n. 13: 90, vol. LXXIX, bb. 20, n. 3: 169, vol. XCIX, bb. 6, n. 27: 300; NTR. vol. II, bb. 46, n. 1-2203: 365.

⁴⁸³ MJL. vol. XXII, bb. 5, n. 25: 276.

⁴⁸⁴ Muhammad ordered Fâtima to see to the needs, especially domestic, of Asmâ' bt. 'Umayy after the death of her husband: cf. SDQ³. vol. I, n. 549: 182; HRR¹. vol. II, bb. 27, n. 3506: 273; MJL. vol. LXXIX, bb. 16, n. 21: 83.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. HNB. vol. I, *Musnad 'Abd Allâh b. al-'Abbâs*, n. 2762: 649-650, n. 3485: 788.

⁴⁸⁶ RQM.: 36, 62, 124; SDQ². vol. I, bb. 24, n. 10: 262; TFA². bb. 6, n. 8-256: 154; HDI. vol. IV: 107; IRB. vol. II: 468; MJL. vol. XXVIII, bb. 2, n. 21: 52, vol. XXXVI, bb. 41, n. 110: 288, n. 146: 307, n. 184: 328, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 16: 41, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 49: 218, bb. 8, n. 2: 218,

After the death of her father, her grief continues unabated.⁴⁸⁷ The texts tell us that she never laughed again,⁴⁸⁸ that her weeping increased, and continued interminably, day and night, and she intensified her visits to the graveyard.⁴⁸⁹ This was, in part, a response to the people of Medina, who had complained to ‘Alī that she was keeping them from their rest. Writes al-Majlisī:

vol. LI, bb. 1, n. 37: 78; vol. LXXVIII, bb. 10, n. 56: 391; NTR. vol. II, bb. 34, n. 3-1995: 290. Cf. also JQM.: 121; DAY. vol. II: 419.

⁴⁸⁷ Although lamentation poetry would only develop at a later period, and would be centered chiefly upon al-Husayn, a number of transmitters place on Fâtima’s lips what could qualify as poems of lamentation over her father. These are varied and of differing lengths, and one example, which unfortunately loses its rhythm in the translation, will suffice here: “My strength has been eliminated, my steadfastness has betrayed me, my enemies have been haughty towards me. Father, sadness is killing me. I remain grief-stricken and abandoned, dismayed, alone. My voice is stifled, my back broken, my life made loathsome, my destiny troubled. After you, Father, I find no one close for my desolation, or to stop my tears or to support my weakness. Precise revelations have come to an end after you, as have the coming down of Jibra’īl and the place of Mikā’īl. After you, father, motives have changed, and doors have been shut before me. I hate this world after you. My longing for you will not waver, nor will my desire for you or my grief over you be exhausted” (Cf. MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 15: 174).

⁴⁸⁸ KLY. vol. III, bk. 11 (*Kitāb al-janā’iz*), bb. *Ziyārat al-qubūr*, n. 3: 228, vol. IV, bk. 15 (*Kitāb al-hajj*), bb. *Ityān al-mashāhid wa-qubūr al-shuhadā’*, n. 3: 561; HRR¹. vol. III, bb. 55, n. 3467: 223, vol. XIV, bb. 13, n. 19380: 356; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 24: 195, vol. XCVII, bb. 7, n. 12: 216. Among the Sunnī, cf. ISH. vol. II, bb. 133: 42-43; KTR¹. vol. VI: 333.

⁴⁸⁹ KLY. vol. III, bk. 11 (*Kitāb al-janā’iz*), bb. *Ziyārat al-qubūr*, n. 3: 228, vol. IV, bk. 15 (*Kitāb al-hajj*), bb. *Ityān al-mashāhid wa-qubūr al-shuhadā’*, n. 3: 561; RQM.: 197; SDQ³. vol. I, n. 537: 180; TFA¹. vol. I, bb. 23, n. 168: 465; HRR¹. vol. III, bb. 55, nn. 3467-3468: 223-224, vol. XIV, bb. 13, n. 19380: 356; MJL. vol. XXXVI, bb. 41, n. 224: 352, vol. XLIII, bb. 4, n. 13: 90, bb. 7, n. 24: 195, vol. LXXIX, bb. 20, n. 3: 169, vol. XCVII, bb. 7, n. 12: 216, vol. XCIX, bb. 6, n. 27: 300; NTR. vol. II, bb. 46, n. 1-2203: 365. The texts imply that up until the death of her father, she was accustomed to visit the graves of the martyrs (including Hamza) every Saturday afternoon. After her father’s death, these visits increased to twice every Friday.

“Her sorrow was renewed and increased, and her tears became intense. She sat for seven days, her groaning not subsiding and her yearning not abating. Every day that came, her weeping was more than the first day.”⁴⁹⁰

She asked for her father’s shirt, in which he had been washed after death, fainting when she smelled it, so that ‘Alī had to take it and hide it from her.⁴⁹¹ Even Bilāl⁴⁹² was caught up in her sorrow: having refused, after Muhammad’s death, to sing the Call to Prayer for anyone else, he did so when Fâtima expressed a desire to hear it again. She was convulsed with sorrow upon hearing the familiar words, and the people attempted to persuade Bilāl to cease, but Fâtima insisted that he continue.⁴⁹³

So overwhelming is her sorrow, that assistance is sent from Heaven:

“Fâtima wept over her father for seventy-five days, and Jibrā’il used to come to her and inform her about the situation of her father, and console her, and inform her about what would happen after her. ‘Alī would write this down, and this is like His words, may He be exalted: *«Then (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not!»*”⁴⁹⁴

While in Heaven the angels themselves weep for the tears and grief of Fâtima,⁴⁹⁵ Jibrīl is sent to dictate consoling words to her. These words, written down by ‘Alī, comprise what the Shī’a term the

⁴⁹⁰ MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 15: 174-177.

⁴⁹¹ Op. cit. vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 6: 157.

⁴⁹² An African and ex-slave, freed by Abū Bakr, and whose fine singing voice made him the first to sing the ‘call to prayer’ (*adhān*). Cf. Lings, *M. Muhammad*: 79, 131.

⁴⁹³ SDQ³. vol. I, n. 907: 297; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 7: 107.

⁴⁹⁴ KLY. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitāb al-hujja*), bb. *Fī-hi dhikr al-sahāfa wa-l-jafr wa-mushaf Fâtima*, n. 2: 240, n. 5: 241, bb. *Mawlid al-Zabrā’ Fâtima*, n. 6: 460; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manāqib Fâtima al-Zabrā’*: 385; MJL. vol. XXII, bb. 2, n. 63: 545, vol. XXVI, bb. 1, n. 72: 41, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 67: 79, bb. 7, n. 4: 106, n. 22: 194. Cf. Q. 19: 23.

⁴⁹⁵ MJL. vol. XXII, bb. 1, n. 38: 492.

‘scroll’ (*mushaf*) of Fâtima, an esoteric text passed down from one Imâm to the next.

The loss of her father is only exacerbated by the injustice she perceives in the one who has succeeded him:

“Umm Salama came to call on Fâtima, and said to her: How did you wake from your night, daughter of the Messenger of God? She said: I awoke between grief and sorrow, the loss of the Prophet and the iniquity of the trustee. By God, from the beginning of his Imamate he has torn aside his veil, taking possession of other than what God prescribed in His Revelation and the Prophet, may God bless and save him and his family, established in his interpretation...”⁴⁹⁶

All her grief and anger pours out during her final illness, in a lengthy tirade spoken to the women of the emigrants and the helpers who have gathered around her bed:

“When the illness of Fâtima, the daughter of the Messenger of God, grew worse and overcame her, the women of the emigrants and of the helpers gathered around her and said: Daughter of the Messenger of God, how have you become in your illness? She replied: I have reached a state, by God, of loathing your world and hating your men-folk, whom I have thrown out before even putting them to the test and whom I have hated after having probed them. Shame on the dents of sword, the lassitude of the lance, the foolish prattle of the decision, and miserable *«that which they themselves send on before them: that Allah will be wroth with them and in the doom they will abide»*,⁴⁹⁷ which has already invested them with her rope and attacked them

⁴⁹⁶ SHB. vol. II, bb. *Fî zulâmat abl al-bayt*: 234; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 5: 156-157.

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. Q. 5: 80.

with her incursion,⁴⁹⁸ a mutilation, a barrenness, a crushing for the people who do wrong..."⁴⁹⁹

This injustice is encapsulated chiefly in the *Saqīfa* event,⁵⁰⁰ in which the claim of 'Alī was usurped and the 'people of the house' particularly badly treated, and in the denial of her claim to Fadak. The Fadak issue raises a number of questions. If, as maintained by Shī'a and some Sunnī scholars, Fadak was a gift of Muhammad to Fâtima while he was still alive, then it could not be counted as part of the deceased Muhammad's estate. A gift is not an inheritance. Concomitantly, if it were indeed in the nature of a gift, why would Fâtima need to go to Abû Bakr to claim it after her father's death? Wilferd Madelung offers a slightly different perspective to the whole debate, positing that, as it stands, the Tradition placed in the mouth of Abû Bakr when he refused Fadak to Fâtima was "manifestly in conflict with the letter and the spirit of the Qur'ân."⁵⁰¹ Madelung quotes the Tradition from Ibn Sa'd's *Kitâb al-tabaqât*:

"Fâtima went to Abû Bakr to ask for her inheritance, and al-'Abbâs b. 'Abd al-Muttalib went asking for his, and 'Alī went with them. Abû Bakr said: 'The Messenger of God said: We do not have heirs; whatever we leave is alms. Whatever sustenance the Prophet provided, it is now my responsibility. 'Alī responded: «*And Solomon was David's*

⁴⁹⁸ In most renditions, this reads *ghâra* rather than *ghâr*.

⁴⁹⁹ RTB¹: 39, 41; SDQ⁶. n. 1: 354; TBR². vol. I: 108; HDI. vol. XVI: 233; IRB. vol. I: 492; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 8: 109-109, nn. 9-10: 159-170, vol. LXXIII, bb. 99, n. 2: 15. There are a number of discrepancies between the transmitters.

⁵⁰⁰ In the very hour of Muhammad's death, while the 'people of the house' and some of the Companions were preparing the funeral rites, two much larger groups, the first consisting of Abû Bakr, 'Umar, Abû 'Ubayda and other prominent Meccan 'emigrants' (*muhâjirîn*) and the second comprising the most important Medinan 'helpers' (*ansâr*) gathered at the portico (*saqīfa*) of the Banû Sâ'ida. After some debate, they pledged their allegiance to Abû Bakr, who became the first of the 'rightly-guided Caliphs' (*râshidûn*). After the swearing of allegiance, a group made their way to the house of 'Alī to demand his pledge of loyalty.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Madelung, W. *The Succession to Muhammad*: 360ff.

beir» and Zakariyyâ' said «*who shall inherit of me and inherit (also) of the house of Jacob.*» Abû Bakr replied: It is like this, and you know it as well as I! 'Alî said: This is the book of God speaking! And they were silent and went away."⁵⁰²

Among Ibn Sa'd's transmissions of the event, this one stands alone by virtue of 'Alî retorting to Abû Bakr with two quotes from the Qur'ân, the first from Q. 27: 16 and the second from Q. 19: 6. The issue, Madelung points out, revolves around what Muhammad had meant by 'we': himself only, or the prophets in general. In some variants of the Tradition, the latter meaning is underscored, while in others it is the former. Ibn Kathîr in his *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya* maintains that the two Qur'anic verses placed into the mouth of 'Alî referred to kingship (in the case of Dâwûd) and spiritual leadership (in the case of Zakariyyâ', the poor carpenter), and not to inheritance of goods. Madelung also examines the contention of Caetani that Abû Bakr was following Muhammad's express will: in other words, Fadak had not been his personal property to begin with, but belonged to the common good of the community. But the Qur'ân on at least one occasion directs that land taken by Muhammad in conquest belongs not to the common good of the community but to Muhammad himself (Q. 59: 6). Furthermore, as noted earlier, a number of Sunnî scholars posit that Muhammad did in fact give Fadak to Fâtima.⁵⁰³ With Traditions on both sides, the issue remains unresolved between the Shî'a and the Sunnî.

At the very end of her life, compounding all her other sorrows, Fâtima was involved, together with her husband, in an ugly exchange of words with Abû Bakr. 'Alî, challenging Abû Bakr about his treatment of Fâtima, and specifically his refusal to accept the testimony of the daughter of the Prophet of God, declares:

"You stave off the witness of God that she is pure, and assent to the testimony of the people about her, just as you stave off the judgment of

⁵⁰² SCD. vol. II: 273-275, vol. X: 28-29. Among the Shî'a, cf. RTB¹: 35; TBR². vol. I: 104.

⁵⁰³ Cf. BLD². n. 119: 37-38; DHB. vol. II, n. 4560: 492; SYT. vol. IV, *Sûrat al-isrâ'*: 320.

God and the judgment of His Messenger that he granted Fadak to her and that she took possession of it in his lifetime, and then you assent to the testimony about her of a Bedouin who urinates on his own ankle.”⁵⁰⁴

Addressing a gathering of women in the mosque, Fâtima preaches a lengthy sermon, and ends with a stinging reproach, telling the men what they ought to do with the leadership of Abû Bakr:

“Beware of it! Bag it, put it on the back of a sick, thin-humped she-camel, branded by the disgrace of eternity, bound for the *«fire of Allah, kindled, which leapeth up over the hearts (of men)»* (Q. 104: 7-8). By God’s witness of what you do, *«those who do wrong will come to know by what a (great) reverse they will be overturned»* (Q. 26: 227).”⁵⁰⁵

Abû Bakr then mounts the pulpit and launches an attack on Fâtima’s husband and his supporters:

“In the course of reporting about Fadak, Ibn Abî al-Hadîd related, on the authority of Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-‘Azîz al-Jawharî, that when Abû Bakr heard the sermon of Fâtima, peace be upon her, concerning Fadak, he was troubled by her talk. He ascended the pulpit and said: People, what is this respect for every speech? Where were these in the lifetime of the Messenger of God, may God bless and save him and his family? If someone heard something, let him say so! If someone witnessed something, let him speak. But he is a fox, whose witness is his own tail, who cleaves to every dissension. He it is who says: Make her young again after she has become old! You ask help from the

⁵⁰⁴ TBR². vol. I: 90; MJL. vol. XXIX, bb. 11, n. 26: 82.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. RTB¹.: 37; TBR². vol. I: 104; SHB. vol. II, bb. *Fasl fî zulâmat abl al-bayt*: 236; HDI. vol. XVI: 212; IRB. vol. I: 489; MJL. vol. XXIX: 192.

weak and you ask assistance from women, like Umm Tihâl, whose people liked to fornicate with her.”⁵⁰⁶

The sense is that ‘Alî is accused of rekindling trouble after it has died down. ‘Alî himself suffers a bout of his wife’s sorrow and frustration. Coming in from arguing with Abû Bakr, she finds ‘Alî sitting in the house:

“She said to the Commander of the Faithful: Ibn Abî Tâlib, peace be upon you. You have enclosed yourself like a placenta of the womb and remained in the room of the suspicious! Having demolished the arrival of the falcon, you are hoodwinked by the feathers of the defenseless! This son of Abû Quhhâfa has gone to great lengths to harm me, and by God he has angrily disputed my claim, so that even the leading woman has refused me her help and the emigrant woman her support, and the community casts down its look before me. There is neither supporter nor protector. I went out, by God, suppressing my anger, and have returned coerced. Would that there were no option for me! Would that I had died before this, died before my humiliation, died before my fate...”⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ RTB¹: 38; HDI. vol. XVI: 214; MJL. vol. XXIX: 208. Al-Majlisî transmits incorrectly from Ibn al-Hadîd: the latter reads: “they ask help from the weak and they ask assistance from women”, while the former reads ‘you’ (pl.) instead of ‘they’.

⁵⁰⁷ TBR². vol. I: 107; SHB. vol. II, bb. *Faṣl fî zuḥûmat ahl al-bayt*: 236-237; MJL. vol. XXIX: 206. In terms of this text, there are a number of discrepancies between the transmitters: one of al-Majlisî’s transmissions for instance, contains Fâtima’s accusation that ‘Alî has “grown weak since you laid down your sword”, but other transmissions omit this phrase. Some texts read “the cloak of the womb” while others are rendered as “placenta of the womb.” A slightly freer translation of this text might run: “You are hiding like a fetus in the womb...you have run home like those guilty of being untrustworthy...and having destroyed the strongest, you have been overcome by these weaklings.”

The mental anguish of Fâtima ought to be considered when reading this outburst. But both events continue to loom large in the Shî'a psyche, and persist as polemical issues. Fâtima's vain attempts to claim her rightful inheritance, primarily from Abû Bakr,⁵⁰⁸ drive her in tears to her father's grave, where she weeps with impotent fury over the treatment she has received:⁵⁰⁹

"After you there have been tidings and happenings which, had you witnessed them, the affair would never had become so great. We have missed you the way the earth misses its heavy rains. Your people have become disordered. Look at them, how they have deviated. Jibrîl use to delight us with the verses: now they are hidden from us, and every good is concealed. You were a moon and light which illuminated. To you were sent down the books from the Lord of might. Men have regarded us with displeasure, and made light of us since you were hidden from us. Today we have been usurped! We will weep for you as long as we live, and as long as there remain with us eyes welling up with tears."⁵¹⁰

Fâtima's tears of grief on earth become tears of intercession in Paradise:

RTB¹: 75; BTQ. nn. 776-777: 390; HDI. vol. VI: 46, vol. XVI: 217; TST². vol. I, nn. 356-357: 257-258; IRB. vol. I: 474; HLL¹: 359; MJL. vol. XXVIII: 533, vol. XXIX, bb. 11: 111, 200, 202, 245, 329.

⁵⁰⁹ MFD⁵. n. 8: 30; TBR². vol. I: 90; HDI. vol. I: 198; MJL. vol. XXIX, bb. 11: 27, bb. 11: 107.

⁵¹⁰ RTB¹. 35; KLY. vol. VIII, bk. 35 (*Kitâb al-rawḍa*), bb. *Khutbat amîr al-mu'minin*, n. 564: 375-376; MFD⁵. n. 8: 31; TBR². vol. I: 96, 106; SHB. vol. II, bb. *Fasl fî zûlâmat abl al-bayt*: 208; HDI. vol. I: 43, vol. XVI: 212, 251; TST². vol. I: 265; IRB. vol. I: 489; MJL. vol. XXIX, bb. 11: 108, 130, 233, 239, 307-308, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, nn. 25, 27: 196, vol. LIII, bb. 28: 18. It is to be noted that there are substantial discrepancies in the wording of the transmitters, as well as some errors in the transcription.

“On the authority of Abû Basîr,⁵¹¹ who said: I was with Abû ‘Abd Allâh,⁵¹² talking to him, when his son came to him. He said: Welcome, and embraced and kissed him. Then he said: God despise those who despise you, and take revenge on those who wrong you, and God abandon those who abandon you and curse those who slay you. God is a Supporter, and Guardian and Helper for you. Prolonged is the weeping of the women, and the weeping of the prophets and the holy ones and the martyrs and the angels of Heaven! Then he wept, and said: Abû Basîr, when I look at the offspring of al-Husayn, I would not want to happen to them what happened to their father. Abû Basîr, Fâtima weeps for him, and Hell sobs and sighs deeply, and were it not that its guards hear her tears and are roused by them, there is a fear that evil would go out from it, or that its smoke would escape and burn the people of the earth. They restrain it as long as she continues to weep, and hold it back and make its doors solid, fearing for the people of the earth, nor will Hell settle down until the voice of Fâtima is stilled. The seas are on the point of being torn apart and flowing into each other, and there is not a single drop which does not have a commissioned angel. Whenever the angel hears her voice, he smothers her fire with his wings and confines one from the other, fearing for the world and those in it and those on the earth. The angels, commiserating, do not cease weeping for her tears: they pray to God and implore Him, and the people of the Throne and those around it implore Him, and the voices of the angels are raised in sanctifying God, fearing for the people of the earth. And were one of their voices to reach the earth, it would strike the people of the earth,

⁵¹¹ Cf. NJA. n. 1187: 441; Modarressi, H. *Tradition and Survival*: 395.

⁵¹² The sixth Imâm.

the mountains would be uprooted and the earth with its people shaken. I said: May I be your sacrifice, this is a serious matter! He replied: I have heard of none more serious. Then he said: Abû Basîr, does it please you to be among those who degrade Fâtima?⁵¹³ I wept as he said it, and in weeping had no power over my speech or my words. Then he went to the place of prayer and prayed, and I left him in that position. I had no

⁵¹³ The concept of Fâtima, weeping over the murder of her son until the Day of Resurrection, as well as the Tradition, already examined, that she will be the first to enter Paradise, leads us to ask: where exactly is Fâtima now? Going strictly according to Shî'a theology, she is not in Paradise, but in the place between this world and the Resurrection called the 'barrier' or 'interval' (*barzakh*). Writes one Shî'a author: "The first stage of the soul's life in the Barzakh begins with the withdrawal of the spirit from the body. At the time that man is buried, according to many hadiths, the angels question him on *Tawhid*, Prophecy, and a series of other principles pertaining to belief and religion. Obviously, the answers given by a believer will differ from those given by a disbeliever, and in consequence the grave and the Barzakh will be places wherein divine mercy manifests for the believer, and divine wrath, for the disbeliever...the grave constitutes the beginning of 'Barzakhî' life, which will persist unto the Day of Resurrection." (Shah-Kazemi, R, trans. *Doctrines of Shi'i Islam. A Compendium of Imami Beliefs and Practices*: 126). This helps to clarify the seeming contradiction: that Fâtima could weep in Paradise, a place of bliss and felicity. It is, in fact, in the *barzakh* that she weeps, waiting for the Day of Resurrection, when God will punish those who harmed her and her family. According to the Qur'ân, the *barzakh* is «a barrier until the day when they are raised» (Q. 23: 100), that is, a place of temporary happiness for the good, for this pleasure will end on the Day of Resurrection. That day, when, according to the Qur'ân, a trumpet blast will bring every living creature standing before God (Q. 39: 68), will mark entrance into the domain of the Resurrection, from whence some will proceed to Paradise and some to Hell, each according to the record of his or her deeds. Thus does the *barzakh* "represent a small portion of the reward or punishment that man will receive after resurrection." Cf. Lari, M.M. "Man's Situation in the Intermediate Realm (Barzakh)." *Al-Tawhid*, vol. X, nn. 2 & 3 Rabî' al-Thānī – Ramadān 1413.

use for food, and sleep would not come to me. I became a faster, fearful..."⁵¹⁴

The intimate correlation between Fâtima's great sorrow, the grievances suffered by the 'people of the house', the reward for weeping over these sufferings and Fâtima's exalted, intercessory status is patently encapsulated in words spoken to her by her father:

"When the Prophet informed his daughter Fâtima about the killing of her son al-Husayn, and about the tribulations that would befall him, she wept copious tears and said: My father, when will this happen? He said: In a time devoid of me and you and 'Alî. Her weeping became passionate and she said: Father, who will weep for him, and who will undertake to perform the ceremony of mourning for him? The Prophet said: Fâtima, the women of my community will weep for the women of the people of my house, and their men will weep for the men of the people of my house. They will repeat the ceremony of mourning every year, generation after generation: and on the Day of Resurrection you will intercede for the women and I will intercede for the men. Each one of them who wept over the calamity of al-Husayn, we will take by his hand and we will lead him to Paradise. Fâtima! On the Day of Resurrection, every eye will weep except for the eye that that wept over the calamity of al-Husayn, because they will be laughing, happy in the felicity of Paradise."⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ QQM. bb. 26, n. 9: 169-171; MJL. vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 14: 208; NTR. vol. X, bb. 49, n. 7-12078: 314.

⁵¹⁵ MJL. vol. XLIV, bb. 34, n. 37: 292.

5 THE INTERCESSORY PREROGATIVES OF FÂTIMA

Belief in the intercession of intercessors on the Day of Resurrection, who do so with God's permission, is axiomatic in Islam, at least in the view of the Shi'a.⁵¹⁶ It is also one of the most contentious issues: for while the Shi'a, and some groups within the Sunnî uphold not merely the possibility but also the reality of intercession, others disallow it, insisting that those who believe in it negate their Islam.⁵¹⁷

At the level of the Qur'anic text, the issue is taken up on three levels. Firstly, there are the verses which ostensibly disclaim intercession:

«And guard (yourselves) against a day when no soul will in aught avail another, nor will compensation be accepted from it, nor will intercession be of use to it; nor will they be helped» (Q. 2: 123).

«And forsake those who take their religion for a pastime and a jest, and whom the life of the world beguileth. Remind (mankind) hereby lest a soul be destroyed by what it earneth. It hath beside Allah no protecting ally nor intercessor, and though it offer every compensation it will not be accepted from it» (Q. 6: 70).

⁵¹⁶ Shah-Kazemi, R, trans. *Doctrines of Shi'i Islam*: 132.

⁵¹⁷ So say, for example, the Salafiyya, a reform movement started in Egypt by Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905). Cf. al-Qahtânî, M.S. *al-Walâ' wa-l-Barâ'*. London: al-Firdous Ltd., 1993: 99.

Secondly, there are the verses which contend that intercession is wholly the prerogative of God – that is, only He has the ability to intercede:

«Or choose they intercessors other than Allah? Say: What! Even though they have power over nothing and have no intelligence? Say: unto Allah belongeth all intercession» (Q. 39: 43-44).

Finally, there are those verses which combine the first two categories and give a more complete picture of intercession in Islam. These posit that while intercession belongs properly to God alone, He may, should He wish it, extend the possibility of intercession to others.

«There is no intercessor (with Him) save after His permission» (Q. 10: 3).⁵¹⁸
«No intercession availeth with Him save for him whom He permitteth» (Q. 34: 23).

Accordingly, there are certain chosen ones - such as the prophets, the Imâms, the holy ones (*awliyâ'*) and even the angels - who could receive permission from God, and would be able to intercede and to assist people by Divine acquiescence. Without this Divine consent, no intercession would be possible or accepted.

Even during their earthly lives, the prophets had the capacity to intercede on behalf of those who repented and sought forgiveness and a return to the path of God:

«We sent no messenger save that he should be obeyed by Allah's leave. And if, when they had wronged themselves, they had but come unto thee and asked forgiveness of Allah, and asked forgiveness of the messenger, they would have found Allah Forgiving, Merciful» (Q. 4: 64)
«They said, O our father! Ask forgiveness of our sins for us, for lo! we were sinful. He said: I shall ask forgiveness

⁵¹⁸ Cf. also Q. 2: 255, 19: 87, 20: 109 and 21: 28.

for you of my Lord. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful
(Q. 12: 97-98).

In summary, at the level of the Qur'anic text, intercession is:

1. An impossibility for unbelievers: the Day of Judgment is described as a day on which no intercession will be accepted from the Children of Israel (Q. 2: 48) or the general mass of unbelievers (Q. 2: 254), or the idolaters (Q. 10: 18, 74: 48): «The mediation of no mediators will avail them then» (Q. 74: 48).⁵¹⁹
2. Established categorically and in absolute terms as belonging properly to God:

«Or choose they intercessors other than Allah? Say: What! Even though they have power over nothing and have no intelligence? Say: unto Allah belongeth all intercessions» (Q. 39: 43-44).

3. Further defined as generally permitted for others than God by His permission: «*Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave?*» (Q. 2: 255).⁵²⁰
4. Additionally specified as permitted for the angels on behalf of whomever God wills, expressly among the believers:

«Those who bear the Throne, and all who are round about it, hymn the praises of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe (saying): Our Lord! Thou comprehendest all things in mercy and knowledge, therefor forgive those who repent and follow Thy way. Ward off from them the punishment of hell» (Q. 40: 7).⁵²¹

5. Explicitly and frequently attributed to Muhammad in his lifetime:

⁵¹⁹ Cf. also Q. 2: 48, 254 and 10: 18.

⁵²⁰ Cf. also Q. 10: 3, 19: 87, 21: 28 and 43: 86.

⁵²¹ Cf. also Q. 42: 5.

«So know (O Muhammad) that there is no God save Allah, and ask forgiveness for thy sin and for believing men and believing women» (Q. 47: 19).⁵²²

6. Alluded to in reference to Muhammad in the afterlife: the intercession and mediation of Muhammad on the Day of Judgment has been established by the consensus of scholars (*ijmâ'*), based upon the Qur'anic text and the books of Tradition, and is an article of belief in Islam. The Mu'tazila rejected this, as they held that the man who enters the Fire will remain there forever.

7. The intercession of the prophets as well as the believers has equally been established, based on the possibility of Divine permission, and also because the prophets made a covenant with their Lord (Q. 33: 7, 3: 81) and knowingly bore witness to the truth. The latter is true also of the elite of the believers (Q. 3: 18: *«the angels, and the men of learning»*). A number of Qur'anic verses uphold the prophets' intercession during their lifetime:

«...Abraham promised his father: I will ask forgiveness for thee, though I own nothing for thee from Allah – our Lord» (Q. 60: 4).⁵²³

8. In addition, there are verses concerning the believers' intercession in their lifetime:

«And those who came (into the faith) after them say: Our Lord! forgive us and our brethren who were before us in the faith» (Q. 59: 10).⁵²⁴

Within the texts of Islamic Tradition, Muhammad speaks of his own intercession: in reality, as one author points out, the weight of Islamic teaching falls on the side of intercession rather than against

⁵²² Cf. also Q. 3: 159, 4: 64, 106-107, 8: 33, 90: 80, 84, 9: 103, 113, 24: 62, 60: 12 and 63: 5-6.

⁵²³ Cf. also Q. 12: 97-98 (intercession of Ya'qûb) and Q. 19: 47 (intercession of Ibrâhîm).

⁵²⁴ Cf. also Q. 19: 13.

it.⁵²⁵ A few examples from the books of Sunnî Tradition will suffice.

The texts of Sunnî Tradition establish clearly that God will bring out of the Fire those whom He wishes, whose sins have placed them there provisionally, and that He will do this by intercession.⁵²⁶ The agents of this intercession are named as Muhammad, whose intercession the transmitters link with his 'praised estate' (so-named in the Qur'ân),⁵²⁷ and who claims that he will be the first to intercede and the first whose intercession will be heard,⁵²⁸ as well as the angels, messengers and believers.⁵²⁹ In a lengthy Tradition, Âdam, Nûh, Ibrâhîm, Mûsâ and 'Îsâ all decline their intercession for various reasons (when asked for it), deferring to Muhammad, who is instructed by God to intercede with the assurance that he will be heard.⁵³⁰ Even the believing Muslims on earth can intercede for others,⁵³¹ and Muhammad's intercession is itself not restricted to the Day of Judgment: he speaks, for example, of the intercession he makes on earth for his uncle Abû Tâlib.⁵³²

⁵²⁵ Fitzgerald, M.L. "Mediation in Islam": 196.

⁵²⁶ BUK¹. vol. VIII, bk. 78 (*Kitâb al-riqâq*), bb. 51, n. 563: 367; MSL. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 83, n. 306: 172-173, vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 84, n. 318: 178.

⁵²⁷ «It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to a praised estate» (Q. 17: 79). A number of the texts of Sunnî Tradition link this 'praised estate' with Muhammad's intercessory prerogatives in Paradise. Cf. BUK¹. vol. II, bk. 24 (*Kitâb al-ẓakât*), bb. 51, n. 553: 321-322; MSL. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 84, n. 320: 179-180.

⁵²⁸ MSL. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 85, nn. 330, 332: 188.

⁵²⁹ BUK¹. vol. IX, bk. 93 (*Kitâb al-tawhîd*), bb. 24, n. 532: 395-402; MSL. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 81, n. 302: 167-171.

⁵³⁰ BUK¹. vol. VIII, bk. 78 (*Kitâb al-riqâq*), bb. 51, n. 570: 369-371, vol. IX, bk. 93 (*Kitâb al-tawhîd*), bb. 19, n. 507: 373-376, bb. 24, n. 532: 395-402, bb. 36, n. 601: 442-446; MSL. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 86, n. 322-335: 180-181, nn. 326-327: 184-186; TRM. vol. VII, bk. 38 (*Sifât al-qiyyâma*), bb. 11, n. 2436: 147-150.

⁵³¹ MSL. vol. II, bk. 11 (*Kitâb al-janâ'iz*), bb. 18, nn. 58-59: 654-655. These Traditions speak specifically of Muslims (one hundred or, alternatively, forty), whose intercession at the grave of a deceased believer will be accepted.

⁵³² BUK¹. vol. VIII, bk. 78 (*Kitâb al-riqâq*), n. 569: 369.

Muhammad also claims that to each prophet is given a special prayer, and that he desires to reserve his for intercession for his community on the Day of Judgment.⁵³³ In a similar Tradition, Muhammad tells that he has been given five things which have been given to no messenger before him: one of these is intercession.⁵³⁴ Among the recipients of Muhammad's intercession are those who say sincerely that none but God has the right to be worshiped,⁵³⁵ as well as those who pray that Muhammad will be given the highest place in Paradise and the right to intercede.⁵³⁶ Muhammad also assures his intercession for those who ask *al-was'ila* (described as a rank in Paradise fitting only for one of God's servants) for him.⁵³⁷

"On the Day of Resurrection, a herald will call from the middle of the throne: O people of the Resurrection, lower your gaze, for Fâtima the daughter of Muhammad is crossing..."⁵³⁸

⁵³³ Ibid. vol. VIII, bk. 75 (*Kitâb al-da'awât*), bb. 1, n. 317: 211-212; MSL. vol. I, bk. 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 86, nn. 334-335: 188-189, nn. 337-341: 189-190.

⁵³⁴ Ibid. vol. I, bk. 8 (*Kitâb al-salât*), bb. 56, n. 429: 256; MSL. vol. I, bk. 5 (*Kitâb al-masâjîd wa-mawâdi' al-salât*), bb. 1, n. 3: 370-371.

⁵³⁵ Ibid. vol. I, bk. 3 (*Kitâb al-'ilm*), bb. 34, n. 98: 79; vol. VIII, bk. 78 (*Kitâb al-riqâq*), n. 574: 373.

⁵³⁶ Ibid. vol. I, bk. 11 (*Kitâb abwâb al-adbân*), bb. 8, n. 588: 338-339.

⁵³⁷ MSL. vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-salât*), bb. 7, n. 11: 288-289.

⁵³⁸ Among the Shī'a, cf. RTB¹: 57; RTB²: 18; SDQ¹. n. 4: 17; SDQ⁵. vol. II, n. 55: 32; FNR. vol. I: 147; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ'*: 374; IRB. vol. I: 450, 457, 506; ABD.: 599; MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 62: 53, vol. XXII, bb. 4: 235, vol. XXIV, bb. 63, n. 60: 274, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 48: 52, n. 54: 62, bb. 8, n. 1: 219, n. 2: 220, n. 12: 224, n. 13: 225, vol. LXV, bb. 15, n. 109: 59. Cf. also JQM.: 10, as well as FRT. n. 435: 321. Among the Sunnî, cf. HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4791, p. 180, n. 4821: 190; BGD. vol. VIII, n. 4234: 141; KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 11: 94-95; JWZ¹. vol. I, bb. *Fî dhikr tazwîj Fâtima bi-'Alî*: 423; ATH². vol. V, bb. *Harf al-fâ'*: 523; HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Fî fadlî-hâ wa-tazwîjî-hâ bi-'Alî*: 212; MTQ. vol. V: 96; RHB.: 48; SHL.: 42-43.

A number of the Shī'a transmitters clarify that it is precisely as Fâtima is crossing the Bridge⁵³⁹ that the call arises for gazes to be lowered in deference to her exalted status.⁵⁴⁰ A further amplification is found in some of the Sunnî transmitters: "She will be wearing two green mantles..."⁵⁴¹ Still other Sunnî transmitters add a different element:

"She will pass by with seventy thousand servants from the black-eyed maidens of Paradise, like brilliant lightening..."⁵⁴²

Within the large corpus of Shī'a Traditions which concern eschatology, and particularly in terms of Fâtima, two basic strands are dominant: the first concerns the entry of Fâtima into Paradise, and the second details her status there.

In terms of the first strand, al-Majlisî carries a Tradition which at once causes some difficulty:

"From *Kitâb al-firdaws* of Ibn Shîrawayh al-Daylamî, on the authority of Abû Hurayra, who said: The Messenger of God said: The first person to enter Paradise will be Fâtima. She is to this

⁵³⁹ The Bridge (*al-sirât*) denotes the bridge that traverses Hell. This concept is not articulated in the Qur'ân, but abounds in the Shī'a and Sunnî books of Tradition. Cf. Monnot, G. "Sirât." In *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by H.A.R. Gibb et al., 670-671. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.

⁵⁴⁰ RTB¹: 50, 65; MFD⁵. n. 6: 130; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ*: 374; IRB. vol. I: 457; HLI²: 352; AML. vol. I: 171; ABD.: 472; MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 22, n. 12: 68, vol. XVII, bb. 2: 242, vol. XXVII, bb. 4, n. 144: 139, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50: 70, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 48: 53, bb. 8, nn. 9-11: 222-224.

⁵⁴¹ HNA. vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-sabâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4821: 190 (who notes that some texts read 'red' rather than 'green'); HAY. vol. IX, bb. *Fî fadli-bâ wa-tazwîji-bâ bi-'Alî*: 212; SHL.: 42-43 (who notes, as does al-Nisâbûrî, that some texts read 'red' rather than 'green').

⁵⁴² KWZ. Part I, ch. 5, *Fadâ'il Fâtima al-Zahrâ' bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 11: 94-95; MTQ. vol. V: 96.

community what Maryam was to the children of Israel.”⁵⁴³

Ibn Shahrâshûb transmits it in his *Manâqib al-Abî Tâlib* from Abû Sâlih al-Mu’adhdhin in his *al-Arba’îna*.⁵⁴⁴ Al-Majlisî transmits it twice: once from one Ibn Shîrawayh al-Daylamî in his *Kitâb al-firdaws*, and then from Abû Sâlih. Among the Sunnî, al-Dhahabî also carries it from Abû Sâlih,⁵⁴⁵ but it is found in no other major transmitter, Shî’a or Sunnî. This Tradition appears to gainsay a number of others: it contradicts the Tradition examined earlier in this thesis, carried by large numbers of Shî’a and Sunnî transmitters, in which Muhammad assures Fâtima that she will be the first to follow him. Presumably, she is therefore the second, and not the first to enter into Paradise, unless one interprets Muhammad’s words strictly in the sense that she will be the first to follow him in death, without any allusion to an entry into Paradise. It also contradicts a body of Traditions carried by Shî’a scholars (besides al-Majlisî) in which Muhammad maintains that he himself will be the first to enter Paradise, and that ‘Alî, Fâtima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn will follow after him:⁵⁴⁶ and some Traditions in which Muhammad claims that he, ‘Alî, Fâtima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn will enter Paradise together:⁵⁴⁷ and finally, a number of Traditions in which it is ‘Alî, and not Fâtima, who is given the promise of being first. ‘Alî will be, with Muhammad, the first for whom the tombs split open, the first, with Muhammad, to stand on the Bridge, the first, with Muhammad, to be robed with heavenly garments, the first, with Muhammad, to stand on the right of the throne, the first, with Muhammad, to knock on the door of Paradise and the first, with Muhammad, to drink the sweet nectar of Heaven.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴³ MJL. vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 38: 70, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 44: 44.

⁵⁴⁴ SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zabrâ’*: 377.

⁵⁴⁵ DHB. vol. II, bb. *Harf al-’ayn*, n. 5057: 618.

⁵⁴⁶ TFA². bb. 12, n. 66-726: 351; AML. vol. II, bb. 16: 87; MJL. vol. XXVIII, bb. 2, n. 8: 45, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 54: 191, vol. LXV, bb. 18, n. 56: 127.

⁵⁴⁷ RTB².: 46; IRB. vol. I: 398; HLL².: 466.

⁵⁴⁸ TBR³.: 444; TFA². bb. 32, n. 21-1335: 641; MJL. vol. XI, bb. 91, n. 70: 35, vol. XLIII, bb. 5, n. 11: 99, vol. LXXIV, bb. 3: 62.

A further strand focuses upon Fâtima's mount on the Day of Resurrection:

"I heard the Messenger of God saying: People, we will be four riders (mounted) in the Resurrection, and none besides us. Somebody said to him: May you be my father and mother! Messenger of God, who are the mounted? He said: I will be on al-Burâq, and my brother Sâlih on the she-camel of God, which his people hamstrung,⁵⁴⁹ and my daughter Fâtima on my she-camel al-'Adbâ',⁵⁵⁰ and 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib on one of the she-camels of Paradise..."⁵⁵¹

Other Traditions which specify her entrance into Paradise are infused with themes of the magnificent vestments of Paradise, of light and of angelic activity:

"The Messenger of God said: My daughter Fâtima will be gathered wearing the garment of esteem soaked in the water of Life.⁵⁵² The creatures will look at her and marvel over her. Then she will also be clothed with the garments of Paradise, one thousand garments, and written on each garment in green script: let the daughter of Muhammad enter Paradise in the most beautiful form, the most beautiful esteem and the most beautiful appear-

⁵⁴⁹ According to the Qur'anic text, the prophet Sâlih was sent to the people of Thamûd, to whom was also sent the camel of God as a sign. Sâlih instructed the people not to harm the creature, but they hamstrung it (Q. 7: 73-77, 11: 64-65, 17: 59, 26: 155-157, 54: 27-29, 91: 13-14).

⁵⁵⁰ Al-'Adbâ' is the name of Muhammad's own she-camel. Cf. KLY. vol. IV, bk. 15 (*Kitâb al-hajj*), bb. *Navâdir al-tawâf*, n. 16: 429. Cf. also YTB². vol. IX, n. 1806: 174.

⁵⁵¹ RTB².: 61; SDQ¹. n. 7: 206; SDQ⁴. vol. I, n. 20: 204; MFD⁵. n. 3: 271; TFA². bb. 2, n. 4: 34; MJL. vol. VII, bb. 8, nn. 1-2: 230-231, vol. XI, bb. 6, n. 6: 380, vol. LXV, bb. 18, n. 25: 112. It is of note that in other accounts, the four riders are named as Muhammad, Sâlih, Hamza and 'Alî: cf. MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 6, n. 6: 149.

⁵⁵² Cf. Q. 29: 64.

ance. She will be led into Paradise as a bride is led, and seventy thousand servants will be assigned to her.”⁵⁵³

The golden thread running through all the narratives about Fâtima on the Last Day is that God vindicates her: here, in the preceding narrative, this vindication is noticeably articulated. Apparently scorned and neglected on earth, Fâtima now wears the vestments of esteem. All of creation must now lower their gaze before the one who on earth suffered such ill-treatment at the hands of some of her father's own followers. This woman, who experienced the humility of a meagre dower and such poverty in her married life, is now clothed in heavenly garments and enters Paradise like a bride. After years of hard and painful toil on earth, she has numerous servants entrusted to her. The Shî'a transmitters develop this theme:

“On the Day of Resurrection, a herald will call before the throne: Assembly of the creatures, lower your gaze until Fâtima the daughter of Muhammad has passed by. She will be the first to be vested, and twelve thousand maidens of Paradise from *al-Firdaws*⁵⁵⁴ will meet her, and with them, fifty thousand angels on thoroughbreds of sapphire, their flanks of chrysolite and their halters of fresh pearl, wearing saddle bags of pearls, on each saddle bag a cushion of silk brocade. She will cross the Bridge with them, and they will come to *al-Firdaws*. The people of Paradise will welcome her, and she will sit on a throne of light and they will sit around her. In the middle of the throne

⁵⁵³ RTB¹: 57-58; SDQ⁵. vol. II, bb. 31, n. 38: 30; ABD.: 599; MJL. vol. XXIII, bb. 63, n. 60: 274, vol. XLIII, bb. 8, n. 6: 221, n. 12: 224.

⁵⁵⁴ Ayoub writes of obscure words that have been taken up by the Arabic language “to convey an aspect of mystery and myth beyond their generally accepted meaning. *Firdaws*, for example, which means ‘paradise’, becomes a specific place in paradise with a special significance.” *Al-Firdaws* is described as a mountain higher than the entire Paradise. Cf. Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. 202.

will be two palaces, a white one and a yellow one, made of pearl from one stock. In the white palace there will be seventy thousand houses, dwellings of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, and in the yellow palace there will be seventy thousand houses, dwellings of Ibrâhîm and the family of Ibrâhîm.

God will send to her (an angel) not sent to anyone before her or after her, and he will say to her: Your Lord greets you with peace and says to you: Ask Me what I can give you. She will say: I am complete by His favor, His Paradise has been permitted to me, His generosity delights me, and He has given me preference over the women of His creation. I ask Him to let me intercede for my offspring and my progeny and for those who are affectionate to them after me and who defend them after me. He said: God will reveal to that angel, without him having moved from his place, to inform her: I have allowed her to intercede for her offspring and her progeny and those who are affectionate to them and love them and defend them after her. He said: She will say: Praise be to God who has removed the grief from me and gladdened my eyes.

Then Ja'far said: whenever my father remembered this Tradition, he would recite this verse: *«And they who believe and whose seed follow them in faith, We cause their seed to join them (there), and We deprive them of nought of their (life's) work. Every man is a pledge for that which he hath earned»* (Q. 52: 21).”⁵⁵⁵

Although we have seen Traditions in which Muhammad promises ‘Alî that he will be the first, with Muhammad, to be robed with heavenly garments, this Tradition patently names Fâtima as the recipient of that honor. Once more, the important elements are

⁵⁵⁵ RTB¹: 57; IRB. vol. I: 506; MJL. vol. XXIV, bb. 23, n. 60: 274-275.

present: entering Paradise in untold glory, all her long sorrow is wiped away by God, who has favored her above all other women, and now gifts her with the power of intercessory prayer.

Within their comprehensive belief in intercession, and the permissibility of seeking such intercession, the Shī'a theologians situate the intercessory prerogatives of Fâtima.

“When Fâtima heard that her father was to give her in marriage, and had given dirhams for her as a dower, she said: My father, the girls of the rest of mankind are given in marriage with dirhams and dinars, and what is the difference between you and the rest of mankind? I will ask God, may He be exalted, to make my dower intercession for the sinners of your community. Instantly, Jibrâ'il descended, holding in his hand a piece of silk on which was written: God, may He be exalted, has made the dower of Fâtima the Radiant, daughter of Muhammad the chosen one, intercession for his sinful community. Fâtima ordered at the time of her departure from the world that the piece of silk be placed on her shroud. She said: When I am gathered on the Day of Resurrection, I will present this in my hand, and I will intercede for the sinners of my father's community.”⁵⁵⁶

This is not a Tradition found in any of the major books of Shī'a Tradition, but forms part of a genre of pious stories, told in different ways but always with an analogous theme. The account serves the constant theme of Fâtima's vindication by God, replacing her poor earthly dower with a remarkable power, and using the recurring premise of God intervening in her life in a singular way. This theme of vindication, and of God giving Fâtima untold power as a reward for her suffering, is articulated in a Tradition in which her intercession, expressed in terms of her ability to judge His creatures, is patently established by God. This narrative, not found in

⁵⁵⁶ Shīrâzî, H. *Kalimat Fâtima*: 68, 187.

any of the major books of the Shī'a corpus, recounts words spoken by God to Muhammad during his 'night journey':

"As to your daughter, I will make her stand near My Throne, and she will be told: God has made you judge over His creation. Whoever harmed you and harmed your offspring, judge them as you wish, and I will sanction your judgment concerning them..."⁵⁵⁷

Other such stories tell of how Fâtima's hearing the voices of the sinners of Muhammad's community crying out is enough to cause God to release them from their torment:

"All the people of grave sins cried out with the testimony of faith (*shahâda*): There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Their voices ascended, and our mistress Fâtima heard their voices and said: I can hear the voices of the community of my father between the strata of the sun and the moon. Jibrâ'il heard the words of Fâtima and said: Let Muhammad be informed. Then the Truth, lofty His splendor, called out to him: Jibrâ'il, the cry of the sinful of the community of my beloved Muhammad has ascended to Me (in the word of *al-tawhîd*). Jibra'il, go to Mâlik, keeper of the Fire, and order him to reduce the chastisement for them. He said: Jibra'il came to Mâlik and said to him: Mâlik, your Lord says: Open the door of the Fire for the people of grave sins of the community of Muhammad and reduce the chastisement for them."⁵⁵⁸

The narrative blends elements of the pious stories and accepted Traditions about Fâtima's intercessory powers as well as of Islamic theology already seen in the Sunnî Traditions about intercession: that God can bring people out of the Fire at His will and that some

⁵⁵⁷ QQM. n. 10: 334.

⁵⁵⁸ Shîrâzî, H. *Kalimat Fâtima*: 79.

people are affected only temporarily by the chastisement of the Fire. Fâtima's hearing the distressed voices of the sinners is enough for her intercessory prerogatives to be honored and her 'dower' to be fulfilled: that she would intercede specifically for the sinners of her father's community. In fact, as we shall see, her intercessory powers are somewhat wider than that, and contain elements that are both active and passive, both positive and negative.

Fâtima's intercessory prerogatives start with a plea for justice, in a genre comprising three basic strands, of which a short example of each will suffice. In the first, in a theme already encountered, Fâtima holds before God the bloodied shirt al-Husayn as a means of beseeching justice. In the second, she is confronted with her murdered son, blood streaming from his jugular vein. In the third, she is confronted with his headless body, and fails at first to recognize him.

The *leitmotif* of al-Husayn's blood-stained shirt held before God by Fâtima has already been seen in a number of Traditions. This moment marks the zenith of all her mourning and grief.

"On the Day of Resurrection, God will gather the first and the last on an equal footing, and a herald will call: Lower your gaze and bow your heads, until Fâtima the daughter of Muhammad has crossed the Bridge. He said: the creatures will cast down their gaze, and Fâtima will arrive on a thoroughbred of the thoroughbreds of Paradise, accompanied by seventy thousand angels, and she will halt in a noble place of the places of the Resurrection. Then she will descend from her thoroughbred, and she will take the shirt of al-Husayn b. 'Alî, stained with his blood, in her hand, and she will say: O Lord, this is the shirt of my son. You know what was done to him..."⁵⁵⁹

The bleeding al-Husayn is another theme:

⁵⁵⁹ MFD⁵. n. 6: 130; HDI. vol. III: 226; MJL. vol. XLIII, bb. 8, n. 11: 224.

“On the authority of Ibn ‘Abbâs, on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful, who said: One day the Messenger of God went to see Fâtima, and she was mourning, and he spoke to her concerning the circumstances of the Resurrection, concerning which he said: You will say: Show me al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and they will come to you, the jugular vein of al-Husayn streaming with blood. He will say: O Lord, obtain for me today my due from those who mistreated me...”⁵⁶⁰

This Tradition is noteworthy because it is al-Husayn, and not Fâtima, who pleads for justice from God. This Tradition is transmitted by al-Majlisî only from Furât al-Kûfî, and is found in none of the major Shî‘a books.

The strand of the ‘headless corpse’ is found in the Tradition we have already examined, in which all living creatures are called upon to lower their gaze as Fâtima passes by. In some accounts, transmitted by al-Majlisî only from Furât al-Kûfî, she is holding the bloodied shirt of her dead son. In others, it is her son who comes to meet her:

“And Fâtima my daughter will pass by, wearing two green mantles and around her seventy thousand maidens of Paradise. When she arrives at the door of her palace, she will find al-Hasan standing there, and al-Husayn standing there, the head severed. She will say to al-Hasan: Who is this, and he will say: My brother. The community of your father killed him and cut off his head...”⁵⁶¹

This Tradition, found in none of the major Shî‘a books, presupposes that Fâtima knows nothing of al-Husayn’s murder and decapitation, and is first apprised of this by al-Hasan. In fact, the

⁵⁶⁰ MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 62: 53, b. 23, n. 116: 172, vol. XLIII, bb. 8, n. 13: 225. Cf. FRT.: 222.

⁵⁶¹ MJL. vol. V, bb. 17, n. 21: 335, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 54: 62, vol. LXV, bb. 15, n. 109: 59. Cf. FRT.: 269, 437.

whole thrust of Shî'a Tradition posits her ceaseless mourning until the Day of Resurrection precisely because the Karbalâ' event.

An examination of the name 'Fâtima' earlier in this work brought to light that God named her so because, among other reasons, her followers (*shî'a*) have been separated or weaned from the Fire, and her enemies have been separated from her love. A further Tradition revealed that God saved her offspring from the Fire because Fâtima was chaste. Already in these two strands – her name and her chastity – is prefigured the power of her intercession: both strands stress that God has saved people from Hell because of Fâtima. In these cases, she is a somewhat passive agent of intercession, with God acting because of her. In fact, this passive intercession of Fâtima is, according to the books of Shî'a Tradition, not only a factor of her name and her chastity, but also of her pre-existence. For our purposes, a number of specific Traditions are of note, all of them transmitted by al-Majlisî and mentioned by al-Mûsawî in his biographical work.⁵⁶²

The prophets and holy ones asked for firmness of purpose from the Messengers through Fâtima. In response to a question put to him by a Jew – “Are you more excellent than Mûsâ b. 'Imrân, the Prophet to whom God spoke, and to whom He sent down the *Tawrât* and the staff, and for whom He split the sea, and whom He shaded with the clouds?” – Muhammad replied:

“When Âdam incurred sin, his repentance was to say: O God, I ask You by the truth of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, if it You would not forgive me, and God forgave it him. And Nûh, when he boarded the ark and feared drowning, said: O God, I ask You by the truth of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, if You would not deliver me from drowning, and God delivered him from it. And Ibrâhîm, when he was cast into the fire, said: O God, I ask You by the truth of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, if You would not deliver me from it, and God made it

⁵⁶² Al-Mûsawî, M. *al-Kawthar*, v. I: 189-198, 205-209, 210-212, 215-218, 219-224.

coolness and peace for him.⁵⁶³ And Mûsâ, when his staff was cast down and he was filled with a sense of foreboding, said: O God, I ask You by the truth of Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, if You would not safeguard me. And God, lofty His splendor said: Do not fear! You are the higher.”⁵⁶⁴

Iblîs desired redemption and asked God for it by the truth of Fâtima. In the course of a narrative concerning a female *jinn* said to be called ‘Afrâ’, the following dialogue occurs:

“‘Afrâ’ came, and the Prophet said to her: ‘Afrâ’, where were you? She said: I was visiting a sister of mine. He said: Happy those who love one another in God and visit each other, ‘Afrâ’! What did you see? She said: I saw many marvels. He said: What marvels did you see? She said: I saw Iblîs in the green sea on a white rock, his hands stretched out to the heavens, and he was saying: My God, when You have fulfilled Your oath and made me enter the Fire of Hell, I will ask You by the truth of Muhammad, and ‘Alî, and Fâtima, and al-Hasan and al-Husayn if You would not liberate me and gather me with them. I said: Hârith,⁵⁶⁵ what are these names by which you plead? He said: I saw them on the leg of the Throne seven thousand years before God, powerful and lofty, created Âdam, and I perceived that they were the most distinguished of the creation for God: and I am

⁵⁶³ SDQ¹. n. 4: 218; FNR. vol. II: 272; TBR². vol. I: 47; ABD.: 53; HRR¹. vol. VII, bb. 37, n. 8846: 100; MJL. vol. XVI, bb. 11: 366, vol. XXVI, bb. 7, n. 1: 319. Cf. Q. 21: 69.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Q. 20: 67-68.

⁵⁶⁵ One of the names given to Iblîs before his fall. Cf. Wensinck, A.J. “Iblîs.” In *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by H.A.R. Gibb et al., 145-146. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995. In his transmission of the text, al-Mûsawî writes ‘Abû Hârith’, but the ‘Abû’ is not found in the original transcripts (cf. al-Mûsawî, M. *al-Kawthar*, v. I: 211).

pleading by them The Prophet said: By God, were the people of the earth to entreat by these names, God, may He be exalted, would answer them.”⁵⁶⁶

The prayer of the prophets and the prayer of Yûsuf in prison were answered through Fâtima. In a group of Traditions, elements of which have widespread occurrence throughout the Shi'a corpus of Traditions, we find God instructing Mûsâ to strike the sea with his staff,⁵⁶⁷ saying, “O God, by the standing of Muhammad and his noble family” as he does so,⁵⁶⁸ as well as a story of Yûsuf in prison, in which he is instructed to say this prayer:

“O He who is Great of all the great, O He who has neither partner nor vizier, O Creator of the sun and the luminous moon, O protection of the necessarily blind, O breaker of every obdurate tyrant, O enricher of the misery of the poor, O mender of the broken bone, O releaser of the shackles of the prisoner, I ask You by the truth of Muhammad and his family, to create for me in my situation a release and a way out, and to bestow upon me what I anticipate and what I do not anticipate.”⁵⁶⁹

It is incumbent upon God to answer and not refuse the prayer of whoever asks by the truth of Fâtima (*bi-haqî Fâtima*). A final group of Traditions reveals that Fâtima's is among the five names most

⁵⁶⁶ SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 13: 638; IRB. vol. I: 465; MJL. vol. XVIII, bb. 9, n. 1: 83, vol. XXVII, bb. 11, n. 1: 13, vol. LX, bb. 2, n. 36: 80, vol. XCI, bb. 28, n. 15: 20; NTR. vol. V, bb. 35, n. 9-5765: 232.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. Q. 20: 77.

⁵⁶⁸ Examples of this Tradition may be found in MJL. vol. XIII, bb. 4, n. 54: 138, vol. XCI, bb. 28, n. 8: 2; NTR. vol. V, bb. 35, n. 10-5766: 233.

⁵⁶⁹ AYY. vol. II, bb. 12, n. 88: 198; MJL. vol. XII, bb. 9, n. 147: 319, vol. XCII, bb. 106, n. 23: 193.

loved by God,⁵⁷⁰ and that He cannot but answer prayer made through these names:

“The Messenger of God said: On the Day of Resurrection, when the people of Paradise are settled in Paradise and the people of the Fire in the Fire, a servant who remained in the Fire for seventy autumns – and an autumn is seventy years – will ask God, powerful and lofty, and will cry out to Him, saying: O Lord, I ask You by the truth of Muhammad and the people of his house if You would not have mercy on me! He said: And God, lofty His splendor, will reveal to Jibrâ’îl : descend to My servant and lead him out. Jibrâ’îl will say: O Lord, how is it possible for me to descend into the Fire? God, may He be blessed and exalted, will say: I have ordered it to be coolness and peace for you. He said: Jibrâ’îl will say: O Lord, what information have I about his location? God will say: He is in a pit of imprisonment. Jibrâ’îl will descend and find him, recognizing him by his face, and will lead him out and stand him before God, powerful and lofty. God, powerful and lofty, will say: My servant! How long did you abide, imploring me in the Fire. He will say: O Lord, I cannot count it. God, powerful and lofty, will say: by My might and My splendor, had not someone asked Me by their truth with Me, I would have looked upon his despicableness in the Fire. But it is My resolution that no servant would ask me by the truth of Muhammad and the people of his house, except that I would forgive him what was between us. Today I have forgiven you. Then he will be ordered into Paradise.”⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷⁰ MFD²: 222; MJL. vol. XXII, bb. 10, n. 63: 347, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 43: 76, vol. XCI, bb. 28, n. 16: 21; NTR. vol. V, bb. 35, n. 1-5757-14: 228.

⁵⁷¹ RTB²: 210; SDQ¹. n. 4: 672; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 9: 584; SDQ⁶. n. 1: 226; MFD⁵. n. 6: 218; TFA². bb. 37, n. 4-1425: 675; FNR. vol. II: 271;

All of these Traditions make Fâtima's intercession contingent upon her membership of the pre-existent 'holy family', but it is a mode of intercession nonetheless, even if in a passive form.

In the following Traditions, Fâtima's intercession ceases to be passive and becomes active, changing from a negative plea for the punishment of those who have done evil to a positive cry for those in need. Having effectively pled with God for justice to be done, she now turns her mediatory powers to four main groups of people.

The large majority of Traditions recounting the intercession of Fâtima make her progeny and those who love them the primary recipients (and first two groups) of her intercessory powers. These recipients are named as her own adherents (*shī'a*), her offspring and all who loved and supported the 'people of the house', (a love that may be expressed merely by grieving for them). These groups are clarified by Fâtima herself as she pleads before the Throne:

"The Messenger of God said: On the Day of Resurrection, my daughter Fâtima will approach on a she-camel of Paradise, the two flanks of its muzzle embellished with fresh pearls, its legs with green emerald, its tail with pungent musk, its eyes two rubies, and over it a dome of light, its exterior perceived from its interior and its interior from its exterior, its inside the pardon of God and its outside the mercy of God. On her head, a crown of light, and for the crown seventy supports, each studded with pearls and sapphire, which will shine the way the glittering star shines in the horizon of heaven. On her right will be seventy thousand angels and on her left seventy thousand angels.

MJL. vol. VII, bb. 24, n. 4: 282, vol. XXVII, bb. 9, n. 5: 312, vol. XCI, bb. 28, n. 1: 1; NTR. vol. V, bb. 35, n. 3-5759: 228. The text, as it is transmitted by al-Mūsawī, contains a number of errors.

Jibrāʾīl will take halter of the camel, shouting at the top of his voice: Lower your gaze, while Fâtima the daughter of Muhammad is crossing. There will not remain at that time a prophet or a messenger or a righteous one or a martyr but that they will lower their gaze while Fâtima is crossing. She will journey until she is facing the Throne of her Lord, lofty His splendor. She will throw herself from her she-camel and say: My God and my Master, judge between me and those who harmed me. O God, judge between me and those who killed my son. And then the call will come from God, lofty His splendor: My beloved and daughter of My beloved, ask Me your desire and make your intercession before Me, and by My might and My splendor the wickedness of the oppressor will not pass Me. She will say: My God and my Master, my progeny, and my adherents, and the adherents of my progeny, and those who love me and the lovers of my progeny. And then the call will come from God, lofty His splendor: Where are the progeny of Fâtima, and her adherents, and those who love her and the lovers of her progeny? They will draw near, encircled by the angels of mercy, and Fâtima will go before them until she has led them into Paradise.”⁵⁷²

In another Tradition, Fâtima’s arrival is described in much a similar vein, but when she reaches the gates of Paradise, she hesitates and turns around, eliciting a question from God:

“And God will say: Daughter of My beloved! Why do you turn around, when I have bade you enter My Paradise? She will say: O Lord! I desired that my standing be known on a day like this. God will

⁵⁷² RTB²: 18; SDQ¹. n. 4: 17; FNR. vol. I: 148; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâʾ*: 374-375; MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 62: 53, vol. XLIII, bb. 8, n. 1: 219, n. 13: 227. Cf. also FRT. n. 587: 446.

say: Daughter of My beloved! Return and see who has in his heart love for you or one of your progeny, take him by the hand and lead him into Paradise. Abû Ja'far⁵⁷³ said: By God, Jâbir, on that day she will pick out her adherents and those who love her the way a bird picks out the good seed from the perishable."⁵⁷⁴

The texts employ other images, besides that of a bird picking out good seed: one set of Traditions narrates that those who love Fâtima will cling to the hem of her cloak⁵⁷⁵ and will be delivered by her from the Fire, while another strand tells us that:

"Fâtima has a position at the gate of Hell. On the Day of Resurrection, between the eyes of every man will be written 'believer' or 'rejecter of faith'.⁵⁷⁶ A lover whose sins were many will be ordered to the Fire, and she will read between his eyes, 'lover'. Then she will say: My God and my Master! You have named me Fâtima and by me have weaned from the Fire those who support me and support my progeny. Your promise is true and You never fail to keep Your promise. God, powerful and lofty, will say: You have spoken the truth, Fâtima! I named you Fâtima and by you weaned from the Fire those who love and support you and love and support your progeny. My promise is true and I never fail to keep My promise. But I ordered this servant of mine to the Fire that you might intercede for him, and I will accept

⁵⁷³ The fifth Imâm.

⁵⁷⁴ MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 59: 51, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 57: 64. Cf. also FRT. n. 403: 298.

⁵⁷⁵ MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 22, n. 12: 68, vol. XVII, bb. 2, n. 2: 242.

⁵⁷⁶ The Arabic *kufir* and its derivatives are difficult to render: its basic meaning is to be irreligious or ungrateful. Pickthall fluctuates between 'unbeliever' and 'disbeliever', but I have chosen, following Ayoub, to render it 'rejection of faith', with the passive participle as 'rejecter of faith'. Cf. Ayoub, M. *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, vol. II, *The House of 'Imrân*: 40.

your intercession, that I might make manifest to My angels, My prophets, My messengers and the people of the gathering your standing and place with Me. Whoever you read between his eyes 'believer', draw him out by his hand and make him enter paradise."⁵⁷⁷

About this Tradition, Ayoub writes:

"This Tradition provides one of the clearest expressions of the concept of redemption in Shī'ī piety... Fātimah's role, as depicted in the Tradition we have just cited, is more than that of an intercessor. She is given the authority to counteract the divine judgment. She does not intercede on the behalf of a believer that his punishment may be lightened, but rather saves a sinner from the torment of hell altogether."⁵⁷⁸

Striking in the narrative is the juxtaposition of the word 'lover' (of the 'people of the house') with the word 'believer'. The two are used interchangeably, suggesting that they are one and the same thing. A believer is tantamount to one who loves and supports Fātima and her progeny.

A rare Tradition offers a place in Fātima's prayers for those who were not her adherents, always understood as members of the Shī'a, but who loved her and her progeny nonetheless:

"There will come to her the call from God: Daughter of the beloved of God, I have related to you what the community of your father did to him, because I have stored up for you with Me consolation in your calamity concerning him: indeed, I have arranged for your consolation in your calamity. I will not consider calling humanity to

⁵⁷⁷ SDQ⁸. vol. I, bb. 142, n. 6: 179; IRB. vol. I: 463; MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 57: 50, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 11: 14.

⁵⁷⁸ Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. 214.

account until you enter Paradise, you and your progeny and your adherents and those who were not of your adherents but who supported you in a friendly manner, before I consider calling humanity to account. And so Fâtima my daughter will enter Paradise, and her progeny and her adherents and those who were not of her adherents but who supported her in a friendly manner. For these are the words of God, may He be exalted, in His Book, *«the Supreme Horror will not grieve them»*:⁵⁷⁹ He said: this is the Day of Resurrection: *«while they abide in that which their souls desire»*:⁵⁸⁰ this, by God, is Fâtima, and her progeny and her adherents and those who were not of her adherents but who supported her in a friendly manner.”⁵⁸¹

This Tradition, transmitted by al-Majlisî only from Furât al-Kûfî's *Tafsîr*, is a continuation of the one already related, in which Fâtima is confronted with the headless body of al-Husayn. In reality, it revisits the theme of a passive intercession: those who are described entering Paradise do so because, even if they were not her progeny or her adherents, they supported her. Al-Mûsawî, who relates this text with a number of errors, argues that it implies her effective intercession: that Fâtima will actively cause those mentioned in the narrative, including non-adherents who supported her, to enter Paradise:⁵⁸² but a careful reading of the extant text does not convey this meaning. Nevertheless, the element of her intercession remains vital.

“In his chain of transmission, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbâs, on the authority of the Prophet, who said: It is as if I am looking at my daughter Fâtima, and she has entered the Day of Resurrection on a thoroughbred of light, seventy thousand angels on

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. Q. 21: 103.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Q. 21: 102.

⁵⁸¹ MJL. vol. VII, bb. 17, n. 21: 335, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 54: 62, vol. LXV, bb. 15, n. 109: 59. Cf. FRT. n. 362: 269, n. 578: 437.

⁵⁸² Cf. al-Mûsawî, M. *al-Kawthar*, v. VII: 390.

her right, seventy thousand angels on her left and seventy thousand angels behind her. She will conduct the women believers of my community into Paradise. Whichever woman prayed, day and night, the five prayers, and fasted in the month of *Ramadân*, and made the Pilgrimage to the holy house of God, and gave of her money in almsgiving, and obeyed her husband, and supported ‘Alī after me, will enter Paradise through the intercession of my daughter Fâtima.”⁵⁸³

It is of note that the Shī‘a transmitter al-Tabarsī, in his *Khâtimat mustadrak al-wasâ’il*, reproduces this Tradition word for word, but omits the name of Fâtima or any mention of her intercession,⁵⁸⁴ making the entry of the women into Paradise dependant rather upon their faithful living out of the Islamic faith.

The majority of Traditions giving details about Fâtima’s intercession are rare, transmitted mostly by Furât al-Kûfī, and by al-Majlisī from him. Firmly entrenched both among the Shī‘a and the Sunnī transmitters is the call to all creatures to lower their gaze as Fâtima crosses the Bridge: the subsequent details are less decisive, even among the Shī‘a transmitters. While her intercession for her progeny, as well as the prayer of Iblīs and some of the prophets through Fâtima and the ‘people of the house’ find a fairly strong resonance in the Shī‘a books, a number of the narratives examined – such as those concerning the bleeding al-Husayn or his headless corpse – are not well-substantiated.

All of these themes, from the Traditions of both the Shī‘a and the Sunnī, are gathered together in a lengthy narrative found in popular Shī‘a piety:

“I heard the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī b. Abī Tâlib saying: The Messenger of God came to call on Fâtima one day, and she was sorrowful. He said to her: What is this sorrow of yours, my

⁵⁸³ RTB²: 177; SDQ¹. n. 18: 468; MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 76: 58, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50, n. 52: 84, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 20: 24.

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. NTR. vol. XIV, bb. 71, n. 9-16646: 258.

child? She replied: My father, I was thinking of the place of congregation and the people standing, denuded on the Day of Resurrection. He said: My child, a truly momentous day! But Jibrâ'il has already informed me from God, powerful and lofty, that He said: the first for whom the world will burst asunder on the Day of Resurrection will be me, then my father Ibrâhîm, then your husband 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib. Then God will dispatch Jibrâ'il to you with seventy thousand angels, who will fashion seven domes of light upon your tomb. Then Isrâfil⁵⁸⁵ will bring you three vestments of light, and standing at your head, will call to you: Fâtima, daughter of Muhammad, betake yourself to your place of congregation. You will rise, your fear at peace, your weakness concealed. Isrâfil will offer you the vestments and you will put them on. Rûfâ'il⁵⁸⁶ will bring to you a thoroughbred of light, its halter of fresh pearls and upon it, a litter of gold. You will mount it, and Rûfâ'il will lead it by its halter. In front of you will be seventy thousand angels, bearing in their hands banners glorifying God. And when the procession has hastened with you, seventy thousand black-eyed maidens of Paradise will welcome you, rejoicing because of you: in the hand of each one of them, a censer of light, from which rises a wind of intensity, without fire: and adorning them, garlands of jewels adorned with pieces of iron of the deepest green: they will journey on your right.

When you have proceeded another distance, as far from the one from your grave to the place of

⁵⁸⁵ The angel who sounds the last trumpet. Cf. Wensinck, A.J. "Is-râfil." In *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by H.A.R. Gibb et al., 184. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.

⁵⁸⁶ One of the angels of the seven heavens. Cf. Murata, S. "The Angels." In *Islamic Spirituality. Foundations*, edited by S.H. Nasr, 328. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997.

meeting the maidens of Paradise, Maryam daughter of 'Imrân will welcome you, with a similar number of those who are with you of the maidens of Paradise: and she will greet you and will journey, she and those who are with her, on your left. Then your mother Khadija, daughter of Khuwaylid, the first of the believers in God and His Messenger, will welcome you. With her will be seventy thousand angels, in their hands banners of exaltation. When you have approached through the gathering, you will be welcomed by Hawwâ', amid seventy thousand maidens of Paradise, and with her, Âsiya, the daughter of Mazâhim, who will journey with you, her and those who are with her. And when you stand in the middle of the gathering – in other words, God will gather the creatures without distinction – they will stand upright (on their feet) (before you). Then a herald will call from under the throne, in the hearing of the creatures: lower your gaze until Fâtima the righteous, the daughter of Muhammad, and those who are with her have crossed. On that day, no-one will look at you except Ibrâhîm, the friend of the Merciful, and 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib. Âdam will look for Hawwâ', and will see her in front of you, with your mother Khadija.

Then a pulpit of light will be set up for you, comprising seven layers, with ranks of angels between each layer, holding in their hands banners of light, and with the black-eyed maidens of Paradise standing in formation on the right of the pulpit and on its left. The nearest of the women to you will be Hawwâ', and Âsiya on your left. When you have reached the uppermost part of the pulpit, Jibrâ'il will come to you and say to you: Fâtima, ask what you desire! You will say: O my Lord show me al-Hasan and al-Husayn! They will come to you, the jugular vein of al-Husayn streaming with blood. He will say: O Lord, obtain for me today

my due from those who mistreated me. Thereupon, the Majestic will grow angry, and because of His anger, Hell and all the angels will grow angry, and thereupon Hell will sigh deeply, with a great sigh. Then a detachment will go out from the fire, and they will gather the killers of al-Husayn and their sons, and the sons of their sons, and these will say: O Lord, we did not take part (in the killing of) al-Husayn! God will say to the violent thrusters of Hell:⁵⁸⁷ Seize them by their mark! By the blueness of eye and the blackness of face! Seize them by their forelocks and fling them into the bottom of the lowest part of the Fire! For indeed they were severer against the supporters of al-Husayn than were their fathers who fought against al-Husayn and killed him! And their groaning will be heard in Hell!

Then Jibrâ'il will say: Fâtima, ask what you desire! You will say: O my Lord, my adherents! And God, powerful and lofty, will say: I have already pardoned them. And you will say: O my Lord, the adherents of my son! And God will say: I have already pardoned them. And you will say: O my Lord, the adherents of my adherents! And God will say: Be free, and whoever adheres to you will be with you in Paradise: and thereupon, the creatures will wish that they had been supporters of Fâtima. You will journey forward, and your adherents with you, and the adherents of your son, and the adherents of the Commander of the Faithful, their fears in peace, their weaknesses concealed: calamities will vanish from them, and for them the places of destination will be made smooth. The people will fear, but they will not be afraid: the people will thirst, but they will not thirst. When

⁵⁸⁷ The guards of Hell, named in Q. 96: 18 as *al-Zabâniyya*, literally 'violent thrusters'.

you have reached the gate of Paradise, twelve thousand maidens of Paradise will receive you, who did not receive anyone before you and who will not receive anyone after you: in their hands, lances of light, on thoroughbreds of light, their saddles of the yellowiest gold and of sapphires, their halters of fresh pearls, on each thoroughbred, a saddle pad of layered silk.

When you have entered Paradise, its people will attend to you, setting up for your adherents tables of jewels on columns of light. They will eat from them with the people of the Redeeming, «*They will not bear the slightest sound thereof, while they abide in that which their souls desire*».⁵⁸⁸ When the holy ones of God come to dwell in Paradise, Âdam and those ranking after him of the Prophets will come to visit you. And in the middle of *al-Firdaws*, two pearls of one stock, a white pearl and a yellow pearl, and within them, palaces and habitations, seventy-thousand habitations in each one – in the white one, the habitations for us and for our adherents, and in the yellow one, habitations for Ibrâhîm and the family of Ibrâhîm.

She said: My father, I would not like to see the day of your death or to remain behind after you. He said: My child, Jibrâ'îl has already informed me from God that you will be the first to join me from the people of my house: affliction for all those who mistreated you, and the great victory for those who assisted you.”⁵⁸⁹

As it stands, this narrative is found only in the work of Furât al-Kûfî⁵⁹⁰ (and is transmitted from him by al-Majlisî), although a number of its elements can be discerned in other Shî'a books of

⁵⁸⁸ Cf. Q. 21: 102

⁵⁸⁹ MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 62: 53-55.

⁵⁹⁰ Cf. FRT. n. 587: 334-335.

Tradition. As a pious narrative, it serves a number of important purposes: it dramatically augments the glory of Fâtima's entry into Paradise, already seen some of the Shî'a and Sunnî transmitters, in terms of her vestments, her mount, the themes of light and angelic activity, as well as in those who meet her in welcome. It also clearly exemplifies the subservience of all the other women of Paradise to Fâtima, and initiates her work of intercession. This began as a negative mediation, pleading punishment for the killers of al-Husayn, and when this had been accomplished, moved to a positive prayer for all who support her, articulated as her adherents (*shî'a*), the adherents of her son al-Husayn, and the adherents of her adherents

6 THE POSSIBILITY OF PARALLELS BETWEEN MARY AND FÂTIMA

Although any deliberation about Mary in terms of Islam almost invariably relates to the person of Maryam in the Qur'ân, it is not hard to distinguish, both in Fâtima's life and in the theology constructed around her by the Shî'a, elements strongly identifiable with the Mariology that is specific to the Roman Catholic Church, leading one into the engaging temptation of drawing comparisons between the Fâtima of Islam and the Mary of Catholicism. Although there is always the danger of pushing an analogy too far, such comparisons may be regarded as valid without necessarily being unequivocal or incontestable. However, since there remains a considerable disparity between the claims made by Catholicism about Mary and her Son, and the claims of the Shî'a about Fâtima and hers, it is not a comparison that this chapter proposes, although sometimes this will be inevitable and useful: rather, since this work has aimed at an examination primarily of the Shî'a theology of Fâtima, this chapter suggests possible parallels between the Shî'a theology and the key Catholic doctrines about Mary. Consequently, there is no suggestion of equality in the lives, but rather an attempt to underscore certain common strands of thought.

It should be noted that the concept of such a timeless or diachronic act as the Immaculate Conception – that is, that the merits of the redemptive act of Christ reach unrestrictedly back into the past and forward into the future – is by no means foreign to the Shî'a worldview: in their attempts to determine the possibility of a redemptive motif in the death of al-Husayn at Karbalâ', Shî'a scholars posit that it was a 'cosmic' event, surpassing history, time and space and appropriating dimensions that know no bounds, touching the whole story of humanity. This is seen in the grief and mourning centered upon Karbalâ' long before the actual event. In this sense, at least, we are on common ground.

While there is a vast difference between the Mary of Catholicism and the Maryam of the Qur'ân, the Islamic texts are not without a hint of some special status for the mother of 'Îsâ: while Maryam is still in the womb, her mother consecrates her to God (Q. 3: 35), begging God's protection for her and her offspring from Satan (Q. 3: 36). God, we are told, «*accepted her with full acceptance and vouchsafed to her a goodly growth*» (Q. 3: 37), providing the child with miraculous food and, according to Q. 3: 42, choosing her, purifying her, and choosing her above all the women of the worlds. Even more explicit is a Tradition carried by al-Bukhârî:

“There is none born of the children of Âdam whom Satan does not touch as soon as he is born, and who does not raise his voice in a cry from the touch of Satan, except for Maryam and her son.”⁵⁹¹

There is unquestionably no immaculate conception for Fâtima, or at the very least, not in the sense that such a Divine favor is posited of Mary by Catholic dogma. But Fâtima is sinless, infallible (*ma'sûm*), an eminence she shares with the other members of the ‘people of the house’ and with the Imâmns that spring from them. The nature of this Divine gift (*isma*) bears investigation, for it suggests a removal of sin from the individual and a resultant flawlessness that is astonishing. The Shî'a theologians speak of the concept of *isma* primarily in terms of the messengers and prophets, understanding it in the sense of inviolability and immunity. This applies to receiving, safeguarding and conveying revelation, to being immune from all disobedience and sin, and to being shielded from all error, both individually and socially.⁵⁹² This flawlessness does not apply to the prophets and messengers alone, for there are others who do not bear the prophetic status, but who share in the inviola-

⁵⁹¹ BUK¹. vol. IV, bk. 55 (*Kitâb abâdith al-anbiyâ'*), ch. 39, n. 641: 426-427.

⁵⁹² The fifth Imâm, Muhammad al-Bâqir, for example, constructs his theology of *isma* around Q. 33: 33 (cf. Lalani, A.R. *Early Shi'î Thought. The Teachings of Imam Muhammad al-Bâqir*: 69). For Maryam, it is based on Q. 3: 42, in which the eighth form verb used of Maryam (*astafâ*), meaning ‘to choose’, is the same used of the prophets (Q. 3: 33).

bility nonetheless. Maryam is regarded as one of these, and so is Fâtima. She is sinless, free from error, immune from wrongdoing. It is no easy thing to determine the precise timing of this sinlessness: within Catholic circles, there was much debate around the precise moment in which God removed all sin from Mary's life. The Qur'anic Maryam is chosen and purified by God (Q. 3: 42), but the text gives no hint of the exact timing of this Divine act. The exegetes themselves are not entirely in accord over this. Al-Tabarî, in treating of Q. 3: 42, certainly links God's choice and purification of Maryam to her mother's dedication of the child, still in the womb, to the service of God – but he does not go as far as saying that she was purified whilst still a fetus. He understands the purification in the sense that Maryam's religion is purified of doubts (*rayb*) and uncleanness (*adnâs*), which form part and parcel of female religiosity.⁵⁹³ Al-Zamakhsharî understands God's choosing of Maryam in the same sense as al-Tabarî (i.e. before her birth): but her purification he takes to mean from the very impure actions of which she would be accused.⁵⁹⁴ Al-Râzî combines the thought of al-Tabarî and al-Zamakhsharî, maintaining that her purification was both bodily and spiritual: Maryam is purified from rejection of faith (*kufr*), disobedience (*ma'siya*), the touch of men (*mas' al-rijâl*), menstruation (*hayḍ*), objectionable works (*al-af'âl al-dhamîma*), repugnant practices (*al-'ādât al-qabîha*), and from the speech of the Jews in terms of their accusation (*tuhma*) and falsehood (*kidhb*).⁵⁹⁵ Al-Qurtubî is not dissimilar, positing that her purification was from rejection of faith (*kufr*) and from all the uncleanness of menstruation, childbirth (*nifâs*) and the like.⁵⁹⁶ The Shî'a exegete al-Bahrânî merely remarks that she was purified from fornication (*siḡāl*), and follows this with a long discourse on Fâtima.⁵⁹⁷ None of these authors determine any temporal framework by stating explicitly that Maryam was purified whilst still in the womb. Concomitantly, in terms of the Shî'a concept of *'isma*, it is patently clear that such a Divine favor belongs, by their very nature, to the 'people of the

⁵⁹³ YTB. vol. III, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 42: 262.

⁵⁹⁴ ZMR. vol. I, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 42: 429.

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. RAZ. vol. VIII, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 42: 42-43; McAuliffe, J.D. Chosen of all Women: 20.

⁵⁹⁶ QRT. vol. IV, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 42: 82-83.

⁵⁹⁷ BHR. vol. I, *Sûrat âl 'Imrân*, v. 42: 280-281.

house' and the Imâms: not so much something conferred as something intrinsic. The Imâms are, according to Shî'a theology, born circumcised and purified by God).⁵⁹⁸ The inescapable suggestion is that Fâtima is not so much made pure as born pure, already bearing within her pre-existent nature the quality of *'isma*. As noted earlier, it is in the naming of Fâtima that we find a clear indication that she was purified by God, at the very least, while still in the womb. In this, she takes precedence over Maryam, about whom no such statement is made.

In Fâtima's case, the clue lies in the Traditions surrounding her naming: there, we discover that she is named Fâtima because of what God has already done for her in terms of weaning or separating her from the Fire, from evil, from polytheism and from menstruation. Fâtima's purification, at once physical and spiritual, is accomplished by God before she is born.

In the accounts of the birth of Mary offered by the Apocryphal Gospels, we discover elements which correspond to the conception and birth of Fâtima (and, concomitantly, the Qur'anic account of Maryam's childhood): more precisely, this is the miracle of being fed with food from Heaven, a text which, in terms of Fâtima's childhood, has been examined earlier in this work.

The naming of Mary in Catholic theology is hardly striking. The texts of the Apocryphal Gospels have the angel instructing her parents, Joachim and Anna, that she is to be called Mary. No special significance is attached to this name by the texts. The case of Fâtima, as noted earlier, could not be more dissimilar.

It is difficult to ascertain precisely how much the writers of the Christian Gospels, as well as the compilers of the Islamic Traditions about Fâtima, were influenced by pagan and other pre-Christian and pre-Muslim estimations of virginity. The authors of the *Protevangelium of James* and of some of the other Apocryphal Gospels certainly seem to have been, as they develop their story of the curious childhood of the Virgin Mary.

The counter-attack against the thought that Christianity had merely 'borrowed' its concept of virginity from pre-existent

⁵⁹⁸ RTB²: 222; SDQ³. vol. IV, n. 5914: 418; SDQ⁴. vol. II, n. 1: 527; SDQ⁵. vol. I, bb. 19, n. 1: 212; SDQ⁶. n. 4: 102; TBR². vol. II; 436; IRB. vol. II: 290; MJL. vol. XXV, bb. 4, nn. 1-2: 116-117, vol. LXXV, bb. 29: 372.

cultures is developed by Origen, in an argument taken up centuries later by John Henry Newman (d. 1890) and Karl Rahner (d. 1984), but not unanimously believed – that God meticulously prepared the world for the ultimate miracle of His Son's Incarnation, with a progression of signs, symbols and dogmas that merely presaged it. Scholars like St. Justin Martyr (d. c. 165) are quick to point out that, unlike so many of the myths of pagan gods and the children they begot, there was no such physical activity between God and Mary, making this a unique and singular case (with its careful distinction between parthenogenesis and divine impregnation): this was not a distinction articulated very clearly by Origen in his interpretation of the classical myths as a foreshadowing of the great miracle to come. Later thinkers in the Church would move away from this parallelism with pagan myths, regarding it as objectionable and finding new ways of underpinning Jesus' birth from a virgin.

Certainly, in terms of Mary and Fâtima and their manner of giving birth, there is a curious link with the doctrine of Mary's virginity *in partu*.⁵⁹⁹ De la Potterie maintains an important linguistic argument: that the words of Lk. 1: 35 (*«the one to be born will be holy»*) have been generally mistranslated, and that 'holy' must be understood as a compliment of 'will be born', thus rendering it "will be born holy."⁶⁰⁰ This, he argues, has a Levitical meaning, not describing the holiness of Jesus but designating the ritual purity of his parturition. He then links this with another verse he holds has been poorly translated: Jn. 1: 13, which reads *«born not of blood.»* In almost all translations, maintains De la Potterie, 'born' is rendered in the plural and 'blood' in the singular: but in the earliest extant texts, 'born' is in the singular (referring to Jesus) and 'blood' in the plural (hard to render in most languages). The verse speaks of the birth of Jesus 'without bloods'. In Biblical usage, the plural 'bloods' is used to designate an emission of blood.⁶⁰¹ For De la Potterie, this verse is a reference to Mary's virginity *in partu*, a birth without the shedding of blood (physical lesion or the rupture of the hymen), and,

⁵⁹⁹ The Catholic Church maintains that Mary was a virgin before, during (*in partu*) and after (*post partum*) the birth of Jesus.

⁶⁰⁰ This, as opposed to 'Isâ son of Maryam, who is described in the Qur'ân as a 'pure boy' (*ghulam zakî*): the 'pure' in the sentence quite clearly refers to the boy himself, and not the manner of his birth. Cf. Q. 19: 19.

⁶⁰¹ De La Potterie, I. *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*: 97-111.

together with her virginal conception, a vital sign of the Divine filiation and singularity of this birth. The insistence upon Fâtima's not shedding blood in birth, as well as her ritual purity (freedom from menstruation) between the births of al-Hasan and al-Husayn is echoed in such a concept.

The question remains: why is virginity such a crucial issue in the lives of Mary and Fâtima? Two factors are at once evident. In Mary's case, there is a long and developed theology, although the early impetus (as opposed to the fact itself) appears to result from a misconstrual of sexuality in general and the sexual act in particular. This is not to deny her virginity: it merely interrogates the thrust of its early justification. With respect to Fâtima, it is patently clear that everything that is posited of the Qur'anic Maryam must also be posited of her, in order to substantiate her superior status in the Shi'a perception. This, by its very nature, means a manipulation of the primary meaning of the terminology: in reality, Maryam's was not a virgin birth (as is posited by the Church of Mary, *in partu*) but a virginal conception.⁶⁰² The Islamic texts do not contend that Maryam's virginity remained intact while giving birth, or that she remained a virgin *post partum*. Fâtima's virginity is immediately and palpably different from the Mary of Catholicism and the Maryam of the Qur'ân, for hers is neither a virginity before, during and after the birth of al-Husayn, nor is it a virginal conception. Mary's virginity, writes De la Potterie, as a whole has two complementary facets: there is the exterior or 'biological' virginity, and there is the interior, best expressed by St. Augustine in his distinction between 'virginity of the flesh' (*virginitas carnis*) and 'virginity of the heart' or 'of faith' (*virginitas cordis*). Mary's 'virginity of the heart' was precisely her virginal intent, which gives a profound theological meaning to her corporeal virginity.⁶⁰³ Mary's virginity is not understood as merely the moment in which she conceives and then gives birth to Jesus. Already in her early years she was purified

⁶⁰² Raymond Brown prefers the term 'virginal conception' to 'virgin birth' for Mary, positing that "the precise question is not the manner of Jesus' birth or how he came forth from the womb, but the manner of his conception." Considering the insistence of the Church on Mary's virginity *in partu*, it is hard to agree with this definition. Cf. Brown, R. *The Birth of the Messiah*: 517.

⁶⁰³ De La Potterie, I. *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*: 143.

and prepared by a profound and singular grace. At the moment of the Annunciation, she had already been filled with grace, and hence the angelic salutation.

Although there are palpable congruencies between Jesus and al-Husayn,⁶⁰⁴ it is the likeness between the mothers that concerns us here.

A considerable element is the angelic activity constructed around the conceptions and births of Jesus and al-Husayn, as well as the cosmic rejoicing when the births occur:

1. In each case, so momentous an occasion merits a heavenly annunciation. In the Arabic texts examined in this thesis, the annunciation of al-Husayn is made to his grandfather Muhammad, rather than to his mother Fâtima – curiously so, because she has merited the title *al-muhadditha* (the Converser [with angels]). In both cases too there is a questioning of the angelic herald, although for different motivations. It is worth noting that, in at least one text examined previously in the work, Fâtima's own conception, birth and future was announced to Muhammad by an angel:

“He said to her: this, Jibra’îl announced to me: that she is a female, and that she is a pure and auspicious person, and that God, may He be blessed and exalted will bring about my progeny from her, and He will bring about from her progeny Imâms in the community, whom He will make leaders on His earth after the termination of His revelation.”⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁴ Examining the Karbalâ’ event and the type of theology and spirituality that has been constructed around it, it is difficult not to think of the life of Jesus and the Christian theological and spiritual tradition. The claims that Jesus makes and that Christians make about him go far beyond the claims of al-Husayn and the beliefs of the Shî’a about who he was. Nonetheless, in the issues of the nature of the Imamate, the atonement of al-Husayn’s martyrdom and his intercessory prerogatives, are powerful reminders of the things that Christians posit about Jesus. Cf. Clohessy, C. “The Face of Islâm Flushed. The Karbalâ’ Event.”

⁶⁰⁵ RTB¹.: 8; SDQ¹. n. 1: 593; FNR. vol. I: 143; RWD¹. vol. II: 524; SHB. vol. III, bb. *Manâqib Fâtima al-Zahrâ’*: 388; MJL. vol. XII, bb. 5: 80, vol. XVI, bb. 5: 80-81.

Once more, as with al-Husayn, the announcement is made not to the mother of the child, but in this case, to her father.

2. The annunciation of al-Husayn is blended with the forewarnings of his martyrdom, as well as with predictions about his status and future achievements. In the case of Jesus, while the predictions about his status and future achievements are distinctly present, the forewarnings are absent, and are only articulated by Simeon, when the child is presented in the temple by Mary and Joseph.⁶⁰⁶ In fact, there is a dream motif concerning Jesus' death, but it comes long after the narratives of his birth: after his arrest, the wife of Pontius Pilate reports having «*suffered much over Him today in a dream*» (Mt. 27: 19). The content of this obviously disturbing dream is not revealed, but it is certainly within the context of the death of a man whom the wife of Pontius Pilate declares 'righteous'.

3. While we have almost no information about the months of Mary's pregnancy, that of Fâtima is somewhat more detailed in the texts. Aside from the Annunciation, and the angelic warnings to Joseph, the Canonical Gospels record no such angelic ministration to Mary during her pregnancy. Conversely, the Apocryphal Gospels do, even if not at length: we have already examined Mary being fed by an angelic hand in the temple, recorded by the *Protevangelium of James*, although this feeding was prior to her pregnancy. *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*⁶⁰⁷ records angels defending the newly-pregnant

⁶⁰⁶ In terms of the predictions of Simeon, and the blend of joy and sadness, St. Theodotus of Ancyra wrote: "To you Simeon spoke a prophecy, saying: O white, innocent dove! O holy tabernacle of our hope, in whom all holiness and magnificence reside! 'This Child' whom you have borne in a way beyond words, 'this Child is set for the downfall and rising of many in Israel, a sign that is spoken against. And a sword shall pierce through your own soul as well, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed' (cf. Lk. 2: 34-35). But why, O old man, do you mix sad predictions with glad tidings? Up until now you have proclaimed 'light' and 'glory', and now you announce 'downfall' and speak of a 'sword' for the Mother." Cf. Gambero, L. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*: 266-267.

⁶⁰⁷ A Latin compilation of which only an 11TH century manuscript is extant (although the Gospel may be as old as the 8TH or 9TH century), and which uses the *Protevangelium of James* and *The Gospel of Thomas* as its sources. Cf. James, M.R., trans. *The Apocryphal New Testament*: 70. The 'Protevangelium of James' exists, according to scholars such as Montague

Mary against false accusation, comforting Joseph in his lament over the inexplicable pregnancy of Mary, and an angel guiding the couple to the cave where Jesus would be born. *The Armenian Gospel of the Infancy*⁶⁰⁸ presents a long dialogue between Mary and Gabriel (after her marriage to Joseph). The light on Fâtima's face until the birth of al-Husayn is distinctively paralleled in the Apocryphal Gospels:

“And they stood in the place of the cave: and behold a bright cloud overshadowing the cave...And immediately the cloud withdrew itself out of the cave, and a great light appeared in the cave so that our eyes could not endure it. And by little and little that light withdrew itself until the young child appeared...and took the breast of its (sic) mother Mary.”⁶⁰⁹

4. While there is a cosmic reaction recorded for both births, these are moderately different. In the case of Jesus, the rejoicing of Heaven is represented by the angels, who proclaim the news to shepherds, representing all the people of the earth. At the birth of al-Husayn, the texts depict an outpouring of joy, among the angels, the people of Paradise, the inhabitants of the earth and even those in Hell, whose punishment is lightened for the occasion. At first sight, no such parallel – of Hell's punishment being diminished as a form of celebration – appears extant in Christian thought. In fact, there is a curious parallel, although it is not part of Catholic dogma and merits nothing more than an aside. It is a strand of thought

James, largely in its original form, both in the original Greek and in a number of oriental languages. It dates to the 2ND century. Cf. JAMES M.R. (trans.), *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1980: xix.

⁶⁰⁸ This manuscript, like *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, relies extensively upon the *Protevangelium of James* and *The Gospel of Thomas*, while greatly amplifying them. It comes from a Syriac text translated into Armenian, but the date of the original remains unsettled. Cf. James, M.R., trans. *The Apocryphal New Testament*: 83.

⁶⁰⁹ *Protevangelium of James*, ch. XIX, vv. 1-2. Cf. James, M.R., trans. *The Apocryphal New Testament*: 46.

freshly discovered by C.S. Lewis, himself not a Catholic, which he came across in the writings of a 17TH century Anglican clergyman, Jeremy Taylor, and used in his own writings. Technically, the strand is called the *Refrigerium*: the idea that, for a period of time or for a particular purpose, God may lessen the sufferings of those in Hell. Taylor claimed to have found it in a Roman missal published in Paris in 1626, although scholars have found no such missal. In fact, what Taylor thought he had discovered was, in all likelihood, a reference to the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory, rather than Hell. But Taylor mentions a second, older source for the *Refrigerium*: the 4TH century Latin poet Prudentius Aurelius Clemens, who penned the following:

“Often below the Styx holidays from their punishments are kept, even by the guilty spirits...Hell grows feeble with mitigated torments and the shadowy nation, free from fires, exults in the leisure of its prison: the rivers cease to burn with their usual sulphur.”

In fact, yet another source is the 9TH century *Voyage of Saint Brendan*, in which the saint meets Judas on one of his infrequent days of indulgence, free from Hell. Scholars claim that the concept of the *Refrigerium* appears to date from the late 4TH century, in a work entitled the *Apocalypse of Paul*, and in which some mitigation of their sufferings is granted to those in Hell for the sake of St. Paul, who has visited them. Such a concept is entertained by a number of Greek apocryphal texts in which Mary visits Hell and cries out to her Son for mercy: in response, Christ grants a certain respite to the sufferers there, on account of Mary’s prayer.⁶¹⁰ Notes one author about Mary’s pleas for those in Hell:

“The differences between the various Apocalypses of the Virgin are of trifling importance – embellishments of the penalties and varying lengths of

⁶¹⁰ Cf. Barnstone, W, ed. *The Other Bible*: 547; Pearce, J. *C.S. Lewis and the Catholic Church*: 102-105 and Hooper, W. *C.S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide*: 279-280.

reprieve gained by the Virgin. In some she obtains almost half the years as respite for the damned. In another, the Virgin does not rest content at a mere interval of relief, but begs her son on her breasts, her womb and her motherhood always to grant her prayers for sinners.”⁶¹¹

Such a plea is reminiscent of Fâtima’s asking that her dower be to intercede for the sinners of her father’s community. Again, it must be restated that these concepts have never been a part of Catholic teaching. Nevertheless, in a strangely ambiguous passage, St. Augustine writes:

“In vain, therefore, do some men, indeed, very many, because of human sentiment, bewail the eternal punishment of the damned and their perpetual, unending torments, without really believing that it shall be so...But let them suppose, if it pleases them, that the punishments of the damned are, at certain periods of time, somewhat mitigated. For even thus it can be understood that they remain in the wrath of God, that is, in damnation itself, - for it is this that is called the wrath of God, not some disturbance in the divine mind: - that in His wrath, that is, by their abiding in His wrath, He does not shut up His mercies; yet, He does not put an end to their eternal punishment, but only applies or interposes some relief to their torments.”⁶¹²

The 9TH century *Voyage of Saint Brendan* has another curious sideline: Brendan comes across Judas sitting on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic, where, Judas claims, his torture in Hell has been mitigated for a certain period of time. It is also on a ‘white rock’ in the middle of a ‘green sea’ that the female *jinn* ‘Afrâ’ meets Iblîs, where

⁶¹¹ Cf. Warner, M. *Alone Of All Her Sex. The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*: 322.

⁶¹² Cf. Jurgens, W.A. *The Faith of the Early Fathers*: 152.

he pleads for redemption through the names of Fâtima and the other members of the 'people of the house'. This Tradition was examined earlier in this work. Interestingly, the *Voyage of Saint Brendan* was in vogue shortly before the time that many of the Traditions concerning Fâtima were being collated by scholars like al-Sadûq, who died in 381/991

As noted earlier, the whole cosmological effect of al-Husayn's birth is underscored by the Shi'a texts: in the Christian accounts of the birth of Jesus, the angels' jubilation and glorification is entirely centred upon God, and the cosmological effects of the Incarnation still lie in the future: conversely, the birth of al-Husayn has an immediate consequence for those in Heaven and Hell, a portend of his martyrdom, which the Shi'a envisage as a 'cosmic' event, touching all of human history, of nature and of the universe. It is also worth noting that, in the context of Fâtima herself, there was general rejoicing among the maidens and other people of Paradise at her birth.⁶¹³

5. Both Mary and Fâtima gave birth under testing circumstances: Mary's was the physical discomfort and immense poverty of her surroundings, while Fâtima's was psychological, her delivery of al-Husayn marred by the predictions of his murder. The Shi'a texts use Qur'anic wording to describe how she conceived and gave birth *«with reluctances»* (Q. 46: 15). In this sense too, both births were overshadowed by a sense of doom – Mary's just after the birth and Fâtima's before it.

The Apocryphal Gospels recount a number of occasions, of which there is no allusion in the Canonical texts, when an exceptionally young Jesus converses with his mother or intervenes in a moment of crisis (such as *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, which records Jesus, in the lap of his mother, bidding a palm tree to lower its fruit so that she could pick it, a narrative which corresponds

⁶¹³ This cosmic reaction is repeated in the moment of the deaths: in the texts examined in this thesis, it has been noted that all creation, even inanimate things, reacted violently at the death of al-Husayn. At the moment of Jesus' death, apocryphal language is used by the Gospel authors to portray this global consequence: the temple curtain was split lengthwise, the earth shook, the rocks were split open, tombs were opened and dead people rose and were seen in the city. Cf. Mt. 27: 51-53.

closely with Q. 19: 23-24).⁶¹⁴ St. Clair-Tisdall notes that in the first chapter of the *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy* the infant Jesus speaks from the cradle:

“In the Book of Josephus, High Priest, who lived at the time of the Messiah (and men say he was Caiaphas), we find it said that Jesus spake when he was in the cradle, and called out to his mother Mary: ‘Verily I am Jesus the Son of God, the Word...’”⁶¹⁵

In the Islamic texts, both Fâtima and al-Husayn speak from the womb: and while there is a highly contentious possibility that so did ‘Îsâ, the texts are more certain that, like the Jesus of the Apocryphal Gospels, he undoubtedly spoke from the cradle in defense of his mother’s purity (Q. 19: 30). No such marvel is posited of Mary, even in the Apocryphal accounts, and this, in a sense, raises Fâtima and al-Husayn above Maryam and ‘Îsâ in status.

The phenomenon of the dove entering the robe of Fâtima exists only as a fragment, but has strong echoes in a number of non-Islamic texts: in some of the Coptic Infancy Gospels, the angels that minister to Mary in the temple are in the form of doves, while in the same texts a white dove alights upon the breast of Mary’s mother Anna (prior to the angelic announcement that she would have a child).⁶¹⁶ More striking is the Christian usage of a dove to symbolize the active presence of God in the Person of the Holy Spirit, seen most clearly in the famous Theophany at the moment of Jesus’ baptism, and recorded by all four Canonical Gospels.

⁶¹⁴ *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, ch. XX. Cf. James, M.R., trans. *The Apocryphal New Testament*: 75.

⁶¹⁵ St. Clair-Tisdall, W. “The Sources of Islam”: 266.

⁶¹⁶ James records a number of Coptic fragments, mostly homilies, panegyrics or biographies, which recount the story of Mary’s birth. A number of these fragments have been collected and published, for example by Forbes Robinson (Cambridge 1896). Cf. James, M.R., trans. *The Apocryphal New Testament*: xxx, 87-88.

*«As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God, descending like a dove and lighting on him.»*⁶¹⁷

Ayoub⁶¹⁸ advocates that the dove which entered the robe of Fâtima is an echo of this very moment, when a dove appeared at Jesus' baptism. In reality, there was no dove at Jesus' baptism: the texts say, not that the Holy Spirit descended in the physical form of a dove, but merely that the Holy Spirit came down in the way a dove might descend from the air.

There is conceivably no area in which the theologies constructed around the Mary of Catholicism and the Fâtima of Islam are more cohesive than in that of grief and lament. Writes Barbara Stowasser:

“In Muslim piety, and here especially Shi'i piety the connection of Mary and Fatima is such that the two figures at times appear collapsed into one...What most deeply binds Mary and Fatima together is the joint image of mistress of sorrows. In Shi'i piety, she is...the grieving mother whose short and hard life was made bitter by the foreknowledge of the future martyrdom of her son Husayn, an event of divine redemption and cosmic significance.”⁶¹⁹

Although by the late 6TH century, St. Ephraim the Syrian, St. Romanos the Melodist (d. c. 560) and Jacob of Sarug (d. 521) had already penned their classic lamentations centred upon the sorrows of Mary, the concept of 'Mother of Sorrows' was really Medieval development, spreading through Italy, France, the Netherlands, Spain and England between the 11TH and 14TH centuries.⁶²⁰ Again, a number of parallels are significant:

⁶¹⁷ Mt. 3: 16, Mk. I: 10, Lk. 3: 22, Jn. I: 32.

⁶¹⁸ Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. 72.

⁶¹⁹ Stowasser, B. *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretation*. 80.

⁶²⁰ The Catholic Church celebrates the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows on September 15TH, the day after the Feast of the Holy Cross, to demon-

1. Both Mary and Fâtima are mothers of sons who will be killed, and regarded, each in his own unique way, as a martyr. Fâtima knows this even before her son is born, so that her sorrow is immediate. Mary's knowledge of her son's death comes later – the prediction of Simeon is not absolutely explicit – but her sorrow could be held to have its starting point in the extremely difficult particulars of her pregnancy – a young girl pregnant outside of marriage – and the trying circumstances of the birth. These are followed in quick succession by the threats of Herod and his murder of countless children, the forced exile of Mary, Joseph and Jesus in Egypt, and the temporary loss of Jesus, aged twelve, in Jerusalem. The salient dissimilarity between the two women is that, while Mary witnesses the arrest, trial, torture and execution of her son, Fâtima does not: she had been dead for almost fifty years.

2. The Biblical image of Mary's mournful stance at the foot of the cross has been captured in countless poems and hymns that now form an integral part of Catholic spirituality. Poignant examples of this *Mater Dolorosa* ('sorrowful mother') image are the *Kontákion* of St. Romanos the Melodist⁶²¹ and the famous *Stabat Mater* of Jaco-

strate the intimate connection between the sufferings of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary. Such a connection is traceable in the Gospels: Jn. 19: 25 (Calvary) and Lk. 2: 35 (Mary's soul pierced with a sword). But additional sorrows can be deduced from Lk. 2: 7 (no room at the inn), Mt. 2: 6-18 (the massacre of the children), Lk. 2: 41-50 (the anxious search for the missing Jesus), Lk. 4: 28-30 (the rejection by people of Nazareth) and Lk. 11: 53-54 (the rejection by authorities of Jerusalem). This style of Marian piety reached its zenith in the 14TH century, but Mary's sorrows were highlighted at a much earlier period too, especially in the Syrian Church, with St. Ephraim, St. Romanos and Jacob of Sarug: the veneration of Mary's grief, based on the crucifixion scene, goes back to this period. Suffice it to say that the imagery of a young and suffering mother bearing a child in an unreceptive world and an older mother grieving beneath the cross of her Son as he was dying entranced generations of believers. This imagery was taken up by a succession of saints and mystics, especially between the 12TH and 14TH centuries: St. Anselm (d. 1109), St. Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), St. Bonaventure (d. 1274), St. Albert the Great (d. 1280), St. Brigid of Sweden (d. 1373), St. Catherine of Siena (d. 1380), St. Peter Canisius (d. 1597) and St. Alphonsus Liguori (d. 1787).

⁶²¹ Gambero describes the *Kontákion* as the adaptation of "a Syrian poetic genre to create a new Greek language form...a sort of homily in verse form." Cf. Gambero, L. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*: 325-326.

pone da Todi (d. 1306). She weeps in sorrow as Jesus dies and, according to a tradition captured in Michelangelo's renowned Pietà, receives him into her arms as he is taken from the cross. Fâtima's son, and his small remnant, were deprived of access to water and finally, on the 10TH day of the month of *Muharram*, were massacred by the huge opposing force.⁶²² Al-Husayn was the last to die, alone, undefended, stripped of his clothing. Fâtima, who has already wept

⁶²² For brevity's sake we can say that the catalyst of the affair was the Caliphate of Mu'âwiya (during whose reign al-Husayn received numerous pledges of support and appeals to lead a revolt) and the accession of Yazîd to the Caliphate after his father Mu'âwiya's death. The motive is at once political and religious: al-Husayn regarded Yazîd, with his demand for allegiance by all, as a licentious profligate. Both Yazîd and his father were seen as men who violated the Islamic socio-political ideal and who thus threatened the foundations of the office of the Caliphate and the very substructure of Islam. Al-Husayn was uncompromising in his rejection of allegiance to Yazîd, and for this reason he could not possibly have stayed in Medina. Again, the commentators stress his resolution, despite the quite obvious outcome of such determination. Perhaps, as some say, he acted with disproportionate idealism and without the adroitness and versatility of a politician. But in the end, he appears to have had little choice. For one thing, all of this was preordained. The commentators see martyrdom as necessary in order to fulfill the office of Imâm. He left Medina for Mecca, where he stayed about four months. He continued to receive letters and emissaries from Kûfa, begging him to lead an insurrection and pledging support. He finally left Mecca without having completed the rites of Pilgrimage (seemingly having heard that enemies had arrived among the pilgrims and intended to shed his blood there). Thus began the fateful journey that would end at Karbalâ'. The group traveling with him grew smaller as many, who had been anticipating conquer, began to experience increasing doubts about his fate. With the arrival of a large group of horsemen sent to intercept him, and the warnings of its leader, al-Husayn led both groups in prayer: he then insisted upon the pledges of support he had received and asked for that allegiance to now be given. He also offered to go back should the people of Kûfa give some sign that they were displeased with his coming. We are also told that he used this opportunity to articulate the reasons for his risk and the jeopardy into which he was bringing his family: an oppressive ruler was violating the sanctions of God, opposing the *Sunna* of Muhammad and ill-treating one of God's servants. To desist in fighting such a ruler would earn one a place in the Fire. Cf. Clohessy, C. "The Face of Islâm Flushed. The Karbalâ' Event."

copiously for him in her lifetime, looks on from beyond the grave and continues to weep as she awaits the Day of Resurrection. The texts are quite clear: these are not only tears of sorrow, but also tears of righteous anger, tears that hope to win the wrath of God against the killers and vindication for the one slain. No such suggestion is found in the tears of Mary.

While the correspondence between the intercession of Mary and that of Fâtima may appear conspicuous, there are a number of important differences to be born in mind:

3. Of its very nature, Mary's intercession depends on two factors: the merits of her Son's redemptive act, and the all-important theme of human repentance. While there may be legends and stories in popular piety about Mary rescuing people from Hell, these do not form part of the teaching of the Church. Her intercessory powers may be powerful, but they remain secondary to the mediation of her Son. But even in the legends, which tell of Mary intervening in various human situations – and St. Gregory of Tours for example collates countless such stories in his *Libri Miraculorum* – repentance on the part of the individual remains a key factor for salvation.

The pious legends and stories of Mary's intercessory powers comprise a number of genres. The first, which flowered in the Middle Ages, but strands of which are still found in parts of Europe, is that through Mary's prayers, infertility and barrenness is defeated and women can bear children. Extant examples of this tradition are found in a number of Marian shrines famous for this aspect of Mary as mother and 'midwife' (a key role of the Qur'anic Maryam in the life of Fâtima) – the 'Black Madonna' of Montserrat, shrines in Chartres, Rome, Milan, Naples and Sicily (where in the frescoes and paintings, Mary is often portrayed with pomegranates or corn, symbols of fertility). Close to this theme is that of Mary miraculously providing dowers for poor and orphan girls: a classic example is the altarpiece in the church of *Santa Maria Sopra Minerva* in Rome. In terms of relics of Our Lady, the sash she wore around her waste (and described by various visionaries) became particularly associated with her power to give the gift of fertility (according to a legend from the Middle Ages, this sash fell into the hands of Thomas the Apostle, an event represented in medieval art found in England, Italy and the ex-Yugoslavia). There are numerous pious legends of Mary intervening, either to provide a child for an infertile devotee, or even to spirit away a child from one who ought not

to be pregnant. A second genre is that of Mary interceding for and intervening in great and small events through the prayers and pleas of needy supplicants:

“She mediates between heaven and earth, for in her glorified body she belongs in both realms. She listen to the implorations of mankind, ‘groaning and weeping in this vale of tears’ – as the *Salve Regina* sings – and promises to ease their pain with heavenly medicine.”⁶²³

As noted before, in theological terms, Mary’s intercession depends upon and is a share in the intercession of her Son, the only mediator between God and humankind. But in popular piety, Mary has unconstrained power. Primarily, she is approached as a mother who will be refused nothing by her Son, whom she asks on behalf of her devotees. Such a theme resonates in the most famous prayers to Mary: the 3RD century *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, and the 11TH century *Salve Regina* and *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. In addition to countless mundane favors, Mary has been petitioned in moments of serious historical crisis: so it is that, by her intercession and intervention, the Turks were held to have been defeated by Christian forces at the Battle of Lepanto (1571), and again at Petrovaradin (1717): no less so was the fall of Communism in the late 20TH century ascribed, at least in part, to Mary’s prayers. The major Marian shrines highlight yet another important intervention believed to be part of Mary’s intercessory prerogatives: the healing of bodily illness and infirmity. In Lourdes (France) and Fatima (Portugal), innumerable pilgrims pray for a cure. (It is a point of note that there are groups within Catholicism who maintain that Mary appeared at a place called Fatima precisely because Muslims ought to be converted to Christianity: and groups within Islam who hold that her appearance there was to uphold the truth of Muhammad by honoring his daughter. Neither of these viewpoints appears to be worthy of much consideration). A third genre is Mary’s intercession for the dying, specifically that they might enter Heaven. It is here most particularly that we find elements strongly resonant in the Shî’a

⁶²³ Warner, M. *Alone Of All Her Sex*: 285.

theology constructed around Fâtima, although the theological differences remain stark. The same Virgin Mary whose powerful prayers can bring fertility, cures from various ills and consolation to those who pray to her, has a more important function within the theology of her intercession: to plead for the salvation of sinners at the throne of God. As noted in this chapter, the repentance of the individual concerned plays a key role in this mediation.⁶²⁴

4. According to the Shi'a texts examined earlier, Fâtima's intercessory prerogatives are a result of her own great sufferings and, primarily, as a result of her membership of the 'people of the house'. Her intercession extends to her adherents, to those who loved and, in varied ways, supported her (even non-Shi'a) and to her progeny. Strictly speaking, although Islam is not without a theology of sin and repentance, repentance does not play a major role in the intercessory role of Fâtima: this partly due to the stark differences in the understanding of sin and repentance in Islam and Christianity.⁶²⁵

⁶²⁴ Warner, M. *Alone Of All Her Sex*: 273-331.

⁶²⁵ As Michel Lagarde points out, at the level of semantics, the Qur'anic language used to articulate the cycle of sin, repentance and forgiveness follows two major directions: the first is the postulate of order and disorder, while the second predicates the axiom of the veil and unveiled. Precisely, Qur'anic terminology, used for sin in general, employs five key terms: *ẓulm*, *ma'siya*, *ithm*, *jurm* and *khaff'a*. Each of these, in its own way, signifies order and disorder: situating something outside of its proper sphere, resisting the effort to bring good order, situating oneself outside of the customary or legal order of things, the separating of something that was part of a whole, and the idea of leaving the original position. Within the same sphere of semantics are other terms used for particular sin (*fasâd*, *fisq*, *dalâl* and *shirk*): these too suggest a movement from order to disorder, from regularity to irregularity, from harmony to disharmony. Concomitantly, the concept of repentance is expressed by the terms *tawba* and *nadâma*: both suggest a movement back from disharmony to harmony, from chaos to order. At a second semantic level are words referring to sin (*ẓulm*, *dhunûb*) and forgiveness (*maghfira*, *'anf*, *takfir*) and which convey the sense of the veiled and the unveiled – hiding faith by sin or disguising the truth, as opposed to God's forgiveness which could be understood as a covering of sin and a veiling of punishment. Since in Islam there exists no concept of 'original sin', the theology of salvation and redemption (in the Christian sense) has no meaning: sin in Islam is understood as wronging oneself, and so does not touch precisely one's relationships with others or even, to some extent, with God. Cf. Lagarde, M.

The texts demarcate certain groupings that benefit from her prayers: her adherents, progeny and those who love her. These can win a place in Paradise chiefly because Fâtima asks it for them: the theme of their own repentance from sin hardly appears in the texts we have examined. Notwithstanding the strict Qur'anic injunctions, which insist that no one intercedes except by the will and permission of God, Fâtima is given an extraordinary liberty in her intercessory role. This is patently clear in one of the texts already examined:

“...God has made you judge over His creation.
Whoever harmed you and harmed your offspring,
judge them as you wish, and I will sanction your
judgment concerning them...”⁶²⁶

The texts also demarcate the various grades of her intercession: passive, merely because she is a member of the ‘people of the house’, with a status and name so potent that it is incumbent upon God to answer the prayers of the prophets and holy ones who use it:⁶²⁷ and active, by the will and permission of God: negative, in terms of which she asks punishment for the killers of her son: and positive, in terms of which she leads her progeny, loved ones and supporters (including a number of women) into Paradise. Love for

“Sin, Repentance and Forgiveness in the Qur'an and Tradition.” In *Encounter*, n. 107, July-August 1984. For Christianity, sin is an act which separates one from God to a greater or lesser extent, for by its very nature is it a negation of God's will, law and covenant relationship of love. All sin springs from the Original Sin of Adam: both ‘original sin’, the state of being deprived of supernatural life, with all its effects, and in which every human is born, and ‘actual sin’, committed, in the final analysis through choice, by the human being. Only God can forgive sin: and God made man in Christ gives the Church the power to transmit His forgiveness. Repentance remains the chief characteristic in this: it means a rejection of sin, a turning from sinful behavior and a return to God. In this, as in the Islamic concept examined above, there is a movement from one state to another (expressed precisely in Catholic theology by the Greek *metanoia*).

⁶²⁶ QQM. n. 10: 334.

⁶²⁷ Inexplicably, the prayer of Iblîs in the name of Fâtima is not answered, and he remains unredeemed.

Fâtima is primary, as seen in a Tradition, which is remarkable close to some of the Gospel passages:⁶²⁸

“Abû Ja‘far⁶²⁹ said: By God, O Jâbir,⁶³⁰ on that day she will pick out her adherents and those who love her the way a bird picks out the good seed from the perishable. When her Shi‘a come with her to the gate of Paradise, God will direct their hearts to turn around, and when they turn around, God, powerful and lofty, will say: My beloved ones, why did you look around when Fâtima, the daughter of My beloved one, has interceded for you? They will answer: O Lord! We would have liked our standing to be known on a day like this. God will say: My beloved ones, go back and look for anyone who loved you for the love of Fâtima. Look for anyone who fed you for the love of Fâtima. Look for anyone who clothed you for the love of Fâtima. Look for anyone who gave you a drink for the love of Fâtima. Look for everyone who prevented slander against you for the love of Fâtima. Take him by his hand and lead him into Paradise.”⁶³¹

⁶²⁸ Specifically, the great judgment scene described in the parable of Mt. 25: 31-46. In terms of the parable, salvation depends on particular works of goodness: *«Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to see me.»* When the recipients of this joyous news query the actual circumstances in which such good actions were performed, they are told by the King: *«Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.»* In a similar strand of thought, Jesus says that *«whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward»* (Mt. 10: 42). In Mark’s version it is *«because you bear the name of Christ»* (Mk. 9: 41).

⁶²⁹ The fifth Imâm.

⁶³⁰ Jâbir al-Ansârî.

⁶³¹ MJL. vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 59: 51, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 57: 64-65.

In the final analysis, and in spite of elements, which, at first glance, appear to be strikingly similar, there are clear and major contrasts in the theologies constructed around these women by their adherents. Aside from the status of sorrowful mother, which certainly unites them (and countless other mothers throughout the course of history), they follow diverse paths. The virginity claimed for both of them is, although in both cases something essentially physical, not the same kind of virginity. The claims made about their respective sons very dissimilar. Their manner of intercession, although in both cases done only because God permits it, is disparate. Their personal histories are different.

Without blurring the arrant inimitability of each, the words of Pope Paul VI about Mary might no less be applied, at least in some of its aspects, to Fâtima:

“The modern woman will note with pleasant surprise that Mary of Nazareth, while completely devoted to the will of God, was far from being a timidly submissive woman or one whose piety was repellent to others; on the contrary, she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions. The modern woman will recognize in Mary, who ‘stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord,’ a woman of strength, who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile...the figure of the Blessed Virgin does not disillusion any of the profound expectations of the men and women of our time but offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city while being a diligent pilgrim towards the heavenly and eternal city; the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy...”⁶³²

⁶³² Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*: 37.

It was 'Ali Shariati who took the Safavid image of Fâtima and re-fashioned her to suit the mood of an Iran on the knife edge of revolution. Shariati offers a beguiling reinterpretation of Fâtima, in which a number of key strands of thought dominate. He begins his argument by postulating the confused state and the rapidly changing status of the contemporary woman, who stands between two other types of women – those who remain in the traditional mould and have no issue with identity crisis, and those who have accepted the innovative and foreign identity. In between are the women ('awakened', in Shariati's mind) who can neither accept their hereditary, traditional forms nor submit to this forced and innovative image, and who are desperately in need of a model in order to re-discover or 'rebirth' their true identity. The contemporary woman wants to elaborate herself, make her own choices. She cannot accept merely being the result of her ethnic heritage, but nor is she willing to assume a shallow veneer. At the same time, she can neither bypass Islam, nor remain apathetic to it.

It is Fâtima whom Shariati proposes as this model, as an unqualified paradigm of an ideal woman whom no one has yet become, the Fâtima whose face, Shariati posits, has remained anonymous behind the constant praise, eulogies, and lamentations of her followers. Thus he demarcates the three faces of women in Islamic societies: the face of the traditional woman, the face of the contemporary woman, who has just begun to grow and know herself, and the face of Fâtima which has no resemblance whatsoever to that of the ethnically Muslim woman. Fâtima is quite clearly in Shariati's mind, neither a traditional woman nor a contemporary and *avant-garde* woman, but something of a *via media*. She is presented as the model because, he argues, neither the traditional woman, hibernating in her archaic worldview, nor the new woman, seduced by the false and shallow worldview of the enemy, can play an vigorous role in helping the women of today to understand who they really are. As such, Fâtima is presented as one who can form new human characteristics as well as break old and empty traditions: neither archaic advice nor modern, facile slogans interest her.

Having situated her as his ideal model for contemporary womanhood, Shariati then laments the fact that the real Fâtima is quite unknown, hidden behind the devotion of her devotees, who know little of her real personality. In fact, he posits, she is a revolutionary personality: formed and shaped by her revolutionary father,

Fâtima's short life, filled with poverty, hardship, weakness, illness and suffering, was, all the while, nothing less than Fâtima 'becoming' Fâtima. For Shariati, she is inextricably linked with the mission and message of her father:⁶³³ why was it, he asks, that while her sisters were permitted to live in relative luxury, Muhammad would not even give Fâtima a servant and frowned censoriously over her attempts to wear jewelry or decorate her home with a colored curtain? Why was it that he treated her so strictly, making no exceptions for her in terms of the law of Islam (Shariati's interpretation of the Tradition, examined earlier in this thesis, that even were Fâtima to steal, her hand would be cut off)? It was because Muhammad was deliberately forming her: for her to 'become' Fâtima obliged him to be strict with her. She would be his last-surviving child, replacing a son as the inheritor of the family name and history, the one who would maintain the values of her ancestors, and with the responsibility of being the link between prophecy and *al-Mahdî*, as well as one of the four highest women of the world and of Paradise.⁶³⁴ In what Shariati describes as almost a covenant relationship, while her father would have to bear the load of making known the revelation of God, his daughter would bear the responsibility of reflecting within herself the newly created revolutionary values. Not only was Fâtima 'becoming' Fâtima, but she was also, in a sense, 'becoming' everything to her father, giving him, through her marriage, replacements for the sons (and later daughters) he had lost.

⁶³³ It is of interest that Shariati believes that Fâtima received the title 'mother of her father' (*Umm Abî-hâ*) because she cared for him so tenderly and championed his cause. This is not quite the normal Shi'a interpretation: nor does it take into account that this title appears only in later texts.

⁶³⁴ Shariati reminds his readers that the other three were Maryam, Âsiya, and Khadija. Following the Traditions that place Fâtima's name last in the list of four, he asks: why was she the last? He reasons that she was the last complete link in the chain for the all time and for all of the cycles of history, last among the saints and an ideal image of the Day of Judgment. Maryam's great value lies with 'Îsâ, whom she bore and nurtured: Âsiya's with Mûsâ, whom she cared for: Khadija's with Muhammad whom she married and supported, and with Fâtima whom she bore and cared for. Fâtima's value is different from these three, for she manifested the essential aspects of Islam.

Essentially it was, Shariati posits, through the intercession of Muhammad that Fâtima ‘became’ Fâtima. He notes that in Islam, intercession is not a way of ‘saving the unworthy’, but rather, the means of reaching ‘the most worthy of salvations’. The individual receives the intercession of an intercessor and through this change his character and behavior in to alter his destiny.

The concept of revolution is yet another key element in Shariati’s vision of Fâtima. The very treatment she received at the hands of her father – his kissing of her, was revolutionary, striking at the roots of the inhumane treatment of their era. His Fâtima is a weak and sickly child, beset by loneliness, hunger and poverty, surrounded by struggles and difficulties, weighed down by sorrow and sadness: but after her death, she would enliven the hearts and spirits of all who fight oppression and discrimination and strive for a truly just Islamic society, so that, even now, her memory affects a revolutionary stimulus in Muslim society. Writes Shariati:

“The memory of Fatima grew with the love and wonderful faith of the men and women, who throughout the history of Islam, fought for freedom and justice. Throughout the centuries they were punished under the merciless and bloody lash of the caliphates. Their cries and anger grew and overflowed from their wounded hearts. This is why in the history of all Muslim nations and among the deprived masses of the Islamic community, Fatima has been the source of inspiration for those who desire their rights, for those who seek justice, for those who resist oppression, cruelty, crime and discrimination”⁶³⁵

This is, in essence, Shariati’s Fâtima: the ideal Islamic woman, and a model for every dimension of womanhood, the perfect paradigm of daughter, wife and mother. Shariati presents her as one whose life is an exemplar for any woman who wishes to ‘become’ herself, through her own choice, and without falling into the trap of an archaic, traditional model or the model of the facile ‘new woman’.

⁶³⁵ Shariati, A. *Fatima is Fatima*.

Fâtima, by her life, answers every question pertaining to what a woman should be: nor is hers a passive life, but one of constant struggle, both in the home and, in a revolutionary way, in society, in her thoughts and her behavior. Her sadness, anger and difficulties, the poverty of her home and the pain she felt in seeing her father rejected, make her the model in the fight for justice and the battle against any form of oppression. Shariati was convinced that Fâtima ought to be a role model, but could not serve in such a role unless liberated from the trappings of popular piety. As noted previously his view is shared by contemporary Lebanese theologian and modern reformist, Muhammad Husayn Fadlallâh:

“Fatima acts as a halo for the visages of all the oppressed who later became the multitudes of Islam. All of the usurped, extorted, oppressed sufferers, all of those whose rights have been destroyed and sacrificed by pressure and force, and have been deceived had the name Fatima for a slogan. The memory of Fatima grew with the love, emotions and wonderful faith of men and women who throughout the history of Islam fought for freedom and justice...she inspires the seekers of justice, the resisters of oppression, cruelty, crime and discrimination. Fatima is the woman that Islam wants a woman to be.”⁶³⁶

A similar debate in Catholic Mariology is seen in the parallel works of two contemporary writers. Elizabeth Johnson⁶³⁷ insists upon the historical Mary: impoverished, sidelined and defenseless, a plausible and tangible woman, friend of God, prophet, and sister to all humanity. Johnson does not want Mary to be held up as the ideal woman, since few find it possible to emulate her, and because such a view is, to her mind, promulgated by a masculine worldview, depicting Mary as mute and submissive, stripped of sexuality and wholly absorbed with motherhood, rather than a complete, totally

⁶³⁶ Shariati, A. *Red Shi'ism*. 4.

⁶³⁷ Johnson, E. *Truly Our Sister. A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*.

fulfilled woman of faith. Mary is not, says Johnson, a religious icon, nor yet the eternal feminine, nor yet an ideal woman. She is primarily just herself. The authoress offers a critical analysis of the apparent veneration of Mary as something more than human, under such symbolic titles as 'Mediatrice' and 'Redemptrix'.

But the argument of a second authoress, Charlene Spretnak,⁶³⁸ is almost diametrically opposed to Johnson's theology. She laments the reduction of Mary's position in the contemporary Church, positing that she be reinstated as a symbol of the 'maternal matrix', a feminine spiritual figure who links human beings with the Divine. Spretnak understands Mary as a quasi-divine personality, ontologically changed by her motherhood of God's Son, so that in addition to being an historical figure, Mary is a 'cosmic-transcendent' presence, proving spiritual strength to all who honor her.

This Marian debate is already seen in the deliberations of Vatican II: some bishops were strongly attached to traditional Marian piety and wanted it maintained. Others, favoring ecumenism and seeing Mariology as something of a stumbling block, urged that the role of Mary be brought more clearly into line with the Scriptural texts and integrated into the total vision of the Church *vis-à-vis* salvation history.

Some contemporary authors have attempted to redefine Mary for a contemporary world:

"Mary is the woman butchered in Rwanda, the Muslim woman raped and brutalized and left pregnant by soldiers, the single mother on welfare, working at subsistence wages, raising her children without help from the church or community or her ex-husband. She is all the women, one third of the world's population always on the move, fleeing from starvation, war, and disasters of flood, earthquake, and draught. She is the woman who mourns the slaughter of the children, the executions of the state, the torture and disappearances

⁶³⁸ Spretnak, C. *Missing Mary. The Queen of Heaven and her Re-emergence in the Modern Church*.

of men and women. She is the shadow of the old ones battered or shunted aside, institutionalized or left on the streets to wander and scavenge for a living...She is the one who belongs to those who have no one else. She is the one who mourns injustice, violence, insensitivity, and selfishness. She is both victim and advocate. She is singer and crier for an end to evils and unnecessary hurt.”⁶³⁹

The following text represents an example of the prayer, in litany-like form, commonly associated with a pilgrimage to a place associated with Fâtima. As a prayer, it serves to highlight some of her titles (and some of those of her father), as well as to underscore some of the theology constructed around her:

“Peace upon you O daughter of the Messenger of God:
 Peace upon you O daughter of the Prophet of God:
 Peace upon you O daughter of the beloved of God:
 Peace upon you O daughter of the friend of God:
 Peace upon you O daughter of the sincere friend of God:
 Peace upon you O daughter of the trusted one of God:
 Peace upon you O daughter of the best of God’s creatures:
 Peace upon you O daughter of the most excellent of God’s prophets, messengers and angels:
 Peace upon you O daughter of the best of all created ones:
 Peace upon you O mistress of the women of the worlds from first to last:
 Peace upon you O wife of the holy one of God and the best of creatures after the Messenger of God:

⁶³⁹ McKenna M. *Mary, Shadow of Grace*: 4.

Peace upon you O Mother of al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the masters of the youths of the people of Paradise:

Peace upon you O righteous one and martyr:

Peace upon you O satisfied one, and she who satisfies God:

Peace upon you O outstanding and pure one:

Peace upon you O maiden of Paradise in human form:

Peace upon you O pious and pure one:

Peace upon you O converser with angels, and knowledgeable one:

Peace upon you O tyrannized and usurped one:

Peace upon you O oppressed and subjugated one:

Peace upon you O Fâtima, daughter of the Messenger of God, and the mercy of God and His blessings. May God bless you, your spirit and your body.

I bear witness that you died fully aware of your Lord: and that the one who gladdens you, has gladdened the Messenger of God, and the one who turns from you has turned from the Messenger of God, and the one who harms you, has harmed the messenger of God, the one who unites himself to you has united himself to the Messenger of God, the one who snubs you has snubbed the Messenger of God: because you are a part of him, and his spirit which is between his two loins.”⁶⁴⁰

Prayers to Mary, in similar litanies, are found scattered throughout the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the saints of various ages. Possibly the most famous and profound of these Marian prayers is the Greek liturgical hymn, of unknown authorship but dating to the late 5TH or early 6TH century, and known as the

⁶⁴⁰ SDQ³. vol. II, bb. *Ziyârat Fâtima bt. Muhammad*: 572; TFA¹. vol. VI, bb. 3: 10; KFM¹. 475; KFM²: 278; MJL. vol. XCVII, bb. 5, n. 12: 195, 199.

Akáthistos.⁶⁴¹ The hymn is too long to reproduce in full: every strophe provides a name applied to Mary, each suggestive of a particular theology. A later, and much simpler example of such a prayer, is the Celtic litany attributed to St. Brogan. This litany too, attributes theologically rich titles to Mary:

“O great Mary, O Mary, greatest of Mary’s, O greatest of women, Holy Mother of God, Mother of Christ, Mother of Divine grace, Mother most pure, Mother most chaste, Mother undefiled, Mother most amiable, Mother most admirable, Mother of good counsel, Mother of Christ our Creator, Mother of our Savior, Mother most worthy, Mother more spacious than the heavens, Mother of consolation, Mother of eternal glory, Mother of the heavenly and earthly Church, Mother of fondness and forgiveness, Mother of the golden Light, Lady of the heavens, Lady of the families of the earth, O Woman full and replete with the grace of the Holy Spirit, True beauty of women, Virgin most prudent, most venerable and faithful, Virgin most powerful, most merciful and renowned, Beauty of virgins, Chief of the maidens, Mirror of justice, Seat of wisdom, Cause of our joy, Joy of all who sorrow, O cleansing of sins, O renewal of life, Spiritual vessel, Vessel of honor, Singular vessel of devotion, Holy grail, Mystical rose, Enclosed garden, Burning bush, Fountain of the gardens, Tower of David, Palace of ivory, House of gold, Ark of the Covenant, Gate of Heaven, Temple of the Divinity, Throne of the Eternal King, Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, Keeper of the portal, Ladder of Heaven, Virgin of the root of Jesse, Cedar of Mount Lebanon, Cyprus of Mount Sion, Purple rose of the land of Israel, O flowering like a palm, O fruitful like the olive tree,

⁶⁴¹ The word means ‘not seated’, meaning that the hymn, an alphabetical acrostic, ought to be sung standing in honor of Mary.

Light of Nazareth, Glory of Jerusalem, Glory of the world, Noblest born of the Christian flock, Morning star, Star of the sea, Health of the sick, Refuge of sinners, Model of saints, Searcher of the lost, Comforter of the afflicted, Breast of the infants, Solace of the wretched, Mother of the motherless, Mother of the unloved, Help of Christians, Terror of demons, Unexpected joy, Sign of tranquility, O shapely like a dove, O serene like the moon, O resplendent like the sun, O quick to hear, Queen of angels, Queen of all saints, Queen of peace, Handmaiden of God, Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of God the Holy Spirit, O blessed and most blessed.”

CONCLUSION

There is a curious question posed by Lammens, the question with which this work began: his dilemma is rooted in the apparent scarcity of references to Fâtima in the earliest texts, weighed against prolific references to her in later sources, and the apparent incongruity between Fâtima as an ordinary woman and the Fâtima we discover in the later texts. Lammens rather contradicts himself by writing of Fâtima in terms of “the indistinct outlines of this vague figure” who remains in a “mysterious twilight”, and then goes on to state definitively:

“During her lifetime she was treated as an ordinary woman by her contemporaries, including her father, her husband and the most eminent Sahibis [Companions of the Prophet] such as Abû Bakr and ‘Umar. Nowhere do we see her enjoying special privileges or greater consideration than that paid to the ordinary Bedouin women of that time...To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to measure the space allotted to her by the oldest chroniclers, such as Ibn Hisham’s *Sira*. She is only mentioned twice...”⁶⁴²

Lammens notes the small amount of space allotted to Fâtima in the ‘oldest chroniclers’, and names Ibn Hishâm’s *Sîrat Muhammad Rasûl Allâh* as an example. This is an inexplicable citation: Ibn Hishâm was writing in the 3RD/9TH century, and he was by no means the only one. This was the same century in which Ibn Sa’d, Ibn Hanbal, al-Dârimî, al-Bukhârî, Muslim, Ibn Mâja, Abû Dâwûd, al-

⁶⁴² Lammens, H. “Fatima and the Daughters of Muhammad”: 222, 226-227.

Tirmidhî and al-Balâdhurî were all at work, producing between them the first major and substantial works of the corpus of Sunnî Traditions and history. In most of these works, we find significant references to Fâtima, even if Ibn Hishâm says little about her. The Shî'a too were already writing in this century, in the figures of Rustam al-Tabarî and the historian al-Ya'qûbî.

By the following century, the writings of al-Nasâ'î would complete the major Sunnî collections, while al-Tabarî would chronicle their history. It was in this 4TH/10TH century that many of the major Shî'a works would arise, with al-Kulaynî, al-Nu'mânî, al-Mas'ûdî, al-Qummî and al-Sadûq. But even if Lammens had deemed the 4TH/10TH century Shî'a works as late, it is unimaginable that he would cite Ibn Hishâm's *Sîrat Muhammad Rasûl Allâh* as the primary work of the preceding century, and ignore the numerous references to Fâtima in Ibn Hishâm's numerous and important contemporaries.

Considering, then, that the major collectors and transmitters of the Sunnî corpus of Traditions themselves lived and worked in the 3RD/9TH century, and that their very *raison d'être* was to put a substantial earlier bulk of oral tradition into an ordered and written form, Lammens' contention holds little sway. The Shî'a transmitters were doing the same as their Sunnî counterparts: it is impossible to judge just how early a tradition came to be, since it was only as late as the 3RD/9TH century that the collections begin to appear in written form. To examine a tradition about Fâtima in the 4TH/10TH century works of al-Sadûq and declare it to be a 'late' development is to misconstrue the process of the transmission of Traditions in Islam.

It seems to me that not only is Lammens decidedly mistaken in his assessment, but he also appears to have missed the point. Even a cursory examination of the Sunnî texts suggests a status for Fâtima that is quite unlike that afforded her contemporaries. Notably:

1. Muhammad's insistence that she was the most loved by him of his family. This is clearly articulated most particularly in the transmissions by the normally hostile 'Â'isha, which describe Muhammad's kissing his daughter and the very distinctive treatment he affords her, seen for example in his visiting her before and after his travels. The strands of these Traditions are already found in the

3RD/9TH century Sunnî writings of Ibn Sa'd, al-Bukhârî, Abû Dâwûd and al-Tirmidhî.

2. The arrant declaration of her precise status in Muhammad's family, to the exclusion of others, in the 'verse of purification' and the mubâhala incident; this Tradition too is found among the earliest Sunnî compilers – Ibn Hanbal, Muslim, al-Tirmidhî and al-Balâdhurî.

3. The very clear promotion of Fâtima by her father to the status of mistress of the community, of the women believers, of the worlds and of Paradise. This is one of the most widely transmitted of the Traditions, and arises already in the 3RD/9TH century Sunnî compilations of Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hanbal, al-Bukhârî, Muslim, al-Tirmidhî and al-Balâdhurî.

4. The declaration by Muhammad that his daughter is so much a part of him that whatever injures her must be regarded as an injury to him is found in almost all the major 3RD/9TH century Sunnî works: Ibn Hanbal, al-Bukhârî, Muslim, Abû Dâwûd, al-Tirmidhî and al-Balâdhurî.

Aside from the work of the Sunnî complier al-Nasâ'î and the historian al-Tabarî, the 4TH/10TH century was something of a 'Shî'a century' in terms of the compilation of Traditions, and many of the ostensibly Shî'a traditions concerning Fâtima arise in this timeframe. These Shî'a compilations can in no sense be deemed 'fringe' writings, for in the very next century, many of their important Fâtima-centered themes are found in the works of their Sunnî counterparts. Notably:

1. The gentle and specific treatment she receives at the hands of her father, transmitted by 'Â'isha and already found in the 3RD/9TH century books, is perpetuated by the 5TH/11TH century Sunnî compilers like al-Nîsâbûrî, al-Isbahânî and 'Abd al-Barr.

2. The status of Fâtima as mistress of the community, and/or the women believers, and/or the worlds and and/or Paradise is carried by almost all the major Sunnî transmitters of the 5TH/11TH century (al-Nîsâbûrî, al-Tha'labî, al-Isbahânî and 'Abd al-Barr).

3. Muhammad's declaration that "Fâtima is part of me" continues in almost all the major transmitters of this period.

What is patently clear is that long before the 4TH/10TH century Shî'a compilations, we already have a good number of fairly precise declarations about Fâtima, declarations that give her a precise status, in the earliest compilations of Sunnî Tradition. Lam-

mens is not incorrect in insinuating that many of the Traditions about her arose later: his error lies in his bypassing the earlier works and their precise contents.

The 5TH/11TH century Sunnî al-Nîsâbûrî introduces new strands, not articulated by his Sunnî predecessors: one of these is that God is angry for the anger of Fâtima, a Tradition transmitted copiously by the Shî'a of the century preceding al-Nîsâbûrî, and which would be taken up again by Sunnî transmitters over the next four centuries (for example, al-Khawârizmî, 6TH/12TH century, Ibn al-Athîr, 7TH/13TH century, al-Dhahabî, 8TH/14TH century and al-'Asqalânî, 9TH/15TH century).

Another of al-Nîsâbûrî's interpolations is the theme of Fâtima being conceived as a result of her father eating mystical fruit in Heaven. What is immediately striking about this Tradition is that those Sunnî transmitters who condemn it, do so not on the basis of the mystical fruit being a palpable fable, but on the basis of what they perceive as a misdating of the 'night journey'. Al-Nîsâbûrî transmits it, but with an annotation of rejection by the 7TH/13TH century al-Dhahabî inserted into the notes by the editor of this edition of al-Nîsâbûrî's work. The 7TH/13TH century al-Jawzî condemns it, as does the 9TH/15TH century al-'Asqalânî, but on the basis of a misdating of the 'night journey'. As noted earlier, this Tradition is nonetheless found in a number of later Sunnî transmitters (for example, al-Baghdâdî, contemporary with al-Nîsâbûrî, al-Khawârizmî, 6TH/12TH century, al-Tabarî, 7TH/13TH century, al-Saffûrî, 9TH/15TH century and al-Suyûtî, 10TH/16TH century).

The declarations surrounding her marriage – that it is ordered by God and that Fâtima is especially created by God for 'Alî – are certainly later traditions, not found among the Sunnî much before al-Khawârizmî (6TH/12TH century). There are other strands of biography too, which highlight something specific about her position, and are found in later works:

1. The patent deference that 'Alî pays her, in his monogamy and in certain domestic matters, in spite of his generally harsh view of women.
2. The fact that Muhammad's wives, conscious of her influence with her father, use her as a spokesperson and, in the same vein, that the politically astute Abû Sufyân pleads her assistance in a moment of crisis.

3. That Muhammad makes explicit and subtle declarations about her, as, for example, in his declaration, based on a grammatical analysis, that she could never possibly steal.

We would be hardpressed, having gleaned all these examples from the Sunnî texts alone, to go along with Lammens' assessment. The truth is that, in spite of a not uncommon presumption, Fâtima is not simply a Shî'a fabrication, but maintains a high standing among the Sunnî.

The theology of Fâtima is undoubtedly associated with the Qur'anic and Islamic view of Maryam, mother of 'Îsâ. Nothing is said of Maryam that is not also posited of Fâtima: this is necessarily so, since in the Shî'a view Fâtima, as daughter and thus 'part' of the Prophet and mother of Islam's savior, al-Husayn, is greater than Maryam and cannot therefore lack some virtue or heavenly gift bestowed upon the latter. Notably:

1. Maryam is a virgin, and consequently, so is Fâtima: although the Qur'ân says nothing about Maryam's status after the birth of 'Îsâ, and whether she remained a perpetual virgin, her virginity and simultaneous motherhood are perceived as a gift of God. Fâtima, on the other hand, is a perpetual virgin, although virginity in her case is somewhat reinterpreted. God steps into her life and removes menstruation (as he may have done for Maryam, according to some scholars like al-Râzî), and this 'virginal' state is enduring.

2. Maryam heard her son speaking as an infant (Q. 19: 30 and, according to some interpretations of Q. 19: 24-26, perhaps from the womb), and Fâtima spoke from the womb to her mother, as did her son al-Husayn.

3. Maryam was fed with miraculous food from Heaven, and consequently, so was Fâtima.

4. Maryam was chosen and purified by God, and so was Fâtima.

5. Maryam conversed with angels, and so did Fâtima.

6. The dead body of Maryam was washed only by one worthy ('Îsâ) and so was Fâtima's ('Alî).

7. Maryam is declared the mistress of the women, and many Shî'a interpreters, as we have seen, regard this as a chronological designation: but Fâtima is designated the mistress of all women, from first to last. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Fâtima is given the title 'the greatest Maryam' (*Maryam al-kubrâ*).

But Fâtima's virginity is an enigma, and remains nothing more than a matter of religious semantics. She must be a virgin, in

the Shī'a view, so as not to be less than Maryam: in order to achieve this, the concept of virginity is redefined, but misconstrued and forced into a category in which it does not rightfully belong. Maryam was a virgin because she conceived a child without male intervention. The same applies to Mary in Catholic dogma. Fâtima is not a virgin: neither physically, because she was married with children who were the result of normative sexual intercourse, and because the failure to menstruate⁶⁴³ could never technically be considered virginity, nor even because she may have been 'pure' of heart and life, for purity in this sense, while a noble value, is not the same as virginity. Non-virgins are not by nature incapable of living pure lives.

The question arises once more: what is it about virginity that is deemed so necessary? So necessary, that classical mythology insists upon labeling as 'virgins' some of its goddesses who were quite patently not, at least in the primary and technical meaning of the word: so necessary, that Islam, a religious system which, while

⁶⁴³ The medical terminology for this condition is 'amenorrhea': it is called 'secondary amenorrhea' to denote the absence of menstrual periods for six months in a woman who had previously been regular, or twelve months in a woman who had had irregular periods (normal menstruation occurs every twenty-three to thirty-five days). 'Primary amenorrhea' denotes a woman who has never had a period in her life, or who has not started to menstruate by the age of sixteen. This is a rare condition, found in about 1% of women. It is most often the result of a late puberty, a fairly common phenomenon among girls who are undernourished or very athletic. It may also be due to a genetic disorder, a birth defect, genital abnormalities, or to a number of medical conditions such as drastic weight reduction through *anorexia nervosa*, poverty, malnutrition or long-term illness. Two things are noteworthy in the case of Fâtima: the first is the great emphasis placed by the texts on her extreme weakness, thinness and poverty. The second is that her failure to menstruate (or even shed blood in childbirth) is witnessed by others. This could well lead us to imagine that Fâtima's lack of bleeding was a medical condition brought about by the prevalence of poverty, malnutrition and illness in her life, and that a witnessed medical phenomenon has been reinterpreted as an act of Divine intervention by Shī'a piety. Furthermore, if we follow the Shī'a dating of her life and marriage, she would have been pregnant and given birth almost every year of her married life: this would hardly have allowed her to return at any time to the normal cycle of menstruation after childbirth, even if such had existed.

valuing virginity before marriage, puts a great stress on conjugal relations and has little time for celibacy, follows the same path as classical mythology, reinterpreting a technical term in order to apply it? It is absolutely certain that virginity gives to a woman a particular status and, in some sense, raises her above the ordinary: but this of itself suggests an unhealthy and wrongly formed view of sexuality. In the world of classical mythology, virginity, however it may have been interpreted, was understood almost in magical terms, as bestowing power and ritual purity.⁶⁴⁴

The prevalence of and stress upon virginity in Catholicism is well documented, and is not our concern here.⁶⁴⁵ But for Islam, it is difficult not to conclude that, in spite of the enormous value placed upon marriage and childbirth, something of the outlook of classical mythology has filtered down. The difference is that the great abhorrence in Islam is not for sexuality but for menstruation, so that the careful redefinition of virginity in the case of Fâtima removes from her life something normative, but deemed reprehensible. But the attendant problem is that, the innate human yearning for an 'ideal', for something 'higher' and more noble, so stressed by Plato, is here entirely frustrated, since Fâtima the model, as she stands in traditional Shî'a Islam, remains wholly unique and consequently unattainable. Shariati's attempt at a contemporary reinterpretation is badly restricted and limited by the context of pre-revolutionary Iran in which he is writing: he does not offer Fâtima as a timeless and universal model, but as a model for a particular group of women in a very specific situation and timeframe.

Furthermore, the complex theology constructed around the life of Fâtima is not of necessity nothing more than a series of

⁶⁴⁴ Hence the numerous stories of those, like Athena, Artemis, Juno and Hera, the wife of Zeus, who renewed their virginity by bathing in rivers. The phenomenon of virginity (and, by extension, a period devoid of sexual activity) conferring strength and power is quite patently seen, in many cultures and religious systems, in the abstinence from food, drink and sexual activity before sacred liturgies or ceremonies. Nevertheless, such abstinence does not have moral or ethical connotations in terms of the sexual acts, but springs rather from the concept of continence or abstinence as a source of power.

⁶⁴⁵ For a brutally honest, but at times one-sided synthesis, cf. Warner, *M. Alone Of All Her Sex*: 68-78.

'borrowings' from an earlier Christian tradition. To maintain this would be to disallow Islam an autonomous religious understanding. There is no doubt that religions and cultures borrow from each other to some extent: but there is even less doubt that influences trickle down through the ages, filtering from one tradition into another, albeit in varied forms. Jung's archetypes, examined briefly in this thesis, are not without validity here. The history of pagan cultures, as well as of various religions, exhibits a plethora of virgins with children, and no shortage of heroic sons with special mothers. It would be both facile and misleading to maintain that these cultures simply stole each other's religious concepts: this would be to follow the 'Ritualistic' or 'Diffusionist' School of Sir James Frazier and others, which posits that all humans had their origin in one place and spread worldwide, carrying their cultures and myths with them, so that if distinct peoples have the same stories or gods, there must have been contact in which the more sophisticated group passed on its ideas to the more primitive. In terms of what has been said of virginity in classical mythology, there is as much chance that Shi'a Islam took its concepts of Fâtima from these concepts, as it did from Christianity.

In this, Fâtima is in fact closer to some of the pagan goddesses than she is to Mary in Catholic dogma. As numerous authors point out, in the case of such goddesses, 'virgin' and 'chastity' (not in the sense of the virtue, but in the sense of not indulging in any sexual activity) were not necessarily synonymous. Venus, Ishtar, Astarte and Anat, all love-goddesses of the Near East and of classical mythology, were all called 'virgin', and yet none of them practiced sexual chastity, but took many lovers. In the case of Artemis, Hippolyte and Athene Parthenos, their virginity was not for any reason of morality or in favor of the virtue of purity: they remained virgins, rejecting male advances because they were paramount, autonomous and alone. This, as Warner writes,

"...is why the title virgin could be used of a goddess who entertained lovers. Her virginity signified she had retained freedom of choice: to take lovers or to reject them."⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁶ Warner, M. *Alone Of All Her Sex*: 47-48.

Warner goes on to cite the Vestal Virgins, whose virginity during their period of office was a matter of political expediency (so that their political status and power might in no way be abused) as well as the bizarre case of Queen Elizabeth I of England, ever called the 'Virgin Queen' although she was known for her sexual prowess. But Fâtima is different, even from these pagan goddesses, for she was married to one husband, and in that sense had no freedom of choice.

The key to understanding Fâtima is undoubtedly Karbalâ' and her son's death there. Certainly, she is intimately connected with her husband 'Alî: the theological reflection upon and development of the person of 'Alî could hardly fail to affect the standing of his wife. But to an even greater extent, Fâtima is wholly inseparable from her son al-Husayn. With the evolution of a 'Karbalâ' consciousness' as a central tenet of Shî'a theology and piety – the institution of public ceremonies of mourning, the pilgrimages to his tomb, the almost mythical aspect given to the soil of Karbalâ', and the augmentation of the theology constructed around al-Husayn – one must anticipate an attendant development in the theology surrounding the person of his mother. As the figure of al-Husayn grows in magnitude, so does his mother. If he is greater even than 'Isâ, for he is perceived as the 'savior' and 'redeemer' of authentic Islam from the corruption of Mu'âwiya and Yazîd, then his mother must be greater than Maryam herself.

In all four major aspects of Fâtima's life we have examined – the miraculous nature of her own conception and birth, the conception and birth of al-Husayn, the great sorrow of Fâtima and her powerful intercessory prerogatives – the Karbalâ' event is all-pervading, the golden thread running through every occurrence:

1. Already in the predictions Muhammad makes about her while she is still in the womb, based on information he receives from Jibrîl, her status as mother of the future Imâms is highlighted, as integral to her very identity. In the moment of her birth, she utters the traditional profession of faith, adding that her son (expressed in the singular, although in some texts it is in the plural, but oddly, not in the dual form) is 'master' of the grandsons (of Muhammad). All of Paradise rejoices at her birth: this cannot be interpreted merely because she is the daughter of Muhammad, for he had other daughters, but must be understood that Paradise rejoices at the

birth of the mother of Islam's prospective savior. The four heavenly visitors who attend her birth are not without a strong symbolism of the future: while people on earth may turn their backs (in this case, on Khadîja, but symbolically on the progeny of Fâtima), Heaven approves of them and supports them.

2. The zenith of angelic activity is to be found in the circumstances surrounding the conception and parturition of her second son, al-Husayn, thoroughly encased in accounts of heavenly intervention. The forewarnings before his birth concentrate on the Karbalâ' event, so that Fâtima's pregnancy is filled with bitter sorrow. "I have no need of a child whom your community after you will kill" is her primary response to her father's ominous announcement. Karbalâ' suffuses and colors her pregnancy and, consequently, the manner in which she looks upon this second son of hers.

3. While Fâtima grieves over numerous issues – the death of her father, the rejection of her husband and usurping of his power, her loss of Fadak, the ill-treatment she and her family receive, the dark future of her son al-Husayn – it is once again the ever-present Karbalâ' event that dominates her mourning and sorrow, even from beyond the grave. It is over Karbalâ' more than anything else that Fâtima weeps incessantly until the Day of Judgment.

4. On the Day of Judgment, her intercessory prerogatives are clearly articulated in her plea before God's throne that the murderers of her son be punished and justice be done. Her grief and righteous anger fills Heaven, affecting the angels and even God Himself, who responds favorably to her plea. It is only after she has dealt with the perpetrators of al-Husayn's murder that she turns her attention to her progeny, adherents and those who love her.

In all this she is primarily the mother of the martyred hero and savior of Islam. It is in theological reflection upon the tragic and lonely figure of al-Husayn that a theology begins to be constructed around his mother. In this light, Lammens' critique is no less incomprehensible by reason of his having been a Catholic priest: as such, he would have had no difficulty in believing or accepting that although Mary is rarely mentioned in the Gospels, or in the earliest non-Scriptural apostolic and post-apostolic texts, a valid theology and spirituality surrounding her arose nonetheless and developed in subsequent centuries. As one author notes, in terms of the exceedingly late development and definition of Mary's Immaculate Conception:

“Such affirmations arose, not from a clear concept or definite thesis about the degree of her grace, but from an obscure yet powerful impulse of Christian hearts to attribute to her the greatest holiness and glory compatible with her status of a creature. This was not mere pious wishfulness, but the germination of the Gospel teaching...”⁶⁴⁷

In terms of the Shīʿa, the development of an elaborate theology and piety around the person of Fâtima could hardly be deemed late. Even were we to follow the opinion of Goldziher (and some Shīʿa scholars) and reject the authenticity of al-Hilâlî's *Kitâb Sulaym b. Qays* (supposedly a work on the cusp of the 1ST/6TH and 2ND/7TH centuries),⁶⁴⁸ many of the definitive Shīʿa statements about her are found in the writings of Rustam al-Tabarî, who died around 224/839, and even more so in the various works of al-Sadûq, who died in 381/991. Of its very nature and quite inevitably, theology, spirituality and piety develop as understanding grows, and because they are not immediately extant or apparent in no way negates their validity. Nor does such a development of necessity signify innovation, but means rather, innovative ways of articulation, an intensification in insight and an advance in the comprehension of a particular issue. By the time the twelfth Imâm went into occultation around 327/940 and the great Shīʿa dynasties began to rise, the theology of the Shīʿa had reached far beyond its initial objectives and its early radicalism. As noted in earlier in this work, the change

⁶⁴⁷ O'Connor, E.D. "Immaculate Conception." In *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2ND edn., vol. VII: 331-335, edited by B.L. Marthater et al. Missouri: Thomason-Gale, 2003.

⁶⁴⁸ While Ahmad posits that only sixteen or seventeen distinct and very early Shīʿa 'notebooks' or 'sources' (*usûl*) are known to be extant in manuscript form, Awliyâ'î holds that most of them are extant in the major Shīʿa collections, and that more than two-hundred have survived to the present day, often prefixed with the title *kitâb* or *navâdir*. He names thirteen of these extant in the Tehran University library: *Kitâb Sulaym b. Qays* is not among them. Cf. Ahmad, N. "Twelver Shīʿi Hadîth: From Tradition to Contemporary Evaluations": 133; Awliyâ'î, M. "Outlines of the Development of the Science of Hadîth": 29.

in the political situation and standing, especially with the rise of the Bûyid dynasty, accelerated the development of Shî'a doctrine. These developments were, concomitantly, mirrored in popular religion, with the decisive institution of the commemoration of al-Husayn's martyrdom and the increase in public mourning services for him, the construction of shrine-tombs for the Imâms, all of them understood as being the direct descendents of Fâtima, and the upsurge in pilgrimages there.

Fâtima is consequently not as much the 'shadowy' creature of Lammens' critique as she is a synthesis of various factors:

1. The steady realization by the Shî'a that they would never attain to the power they thought was their due, and the concomitant turning increasingly to a supernatural, other-worldly power: this would profoundly color their conception of Fâtima. As noted earlier in this thesis, the mystical tendency arose very soon among the early Shî'a: it is notably, for example, that after Karbalâ', the Imâms moved away from political aspirations, terming themselves not 'partisans of 'Alî' but 'friends of God' (*awliyâ*), with the increasingly more important theme of *wilâya* predominating.
2. The factor that Fâtima is the only-surviving child of the Prophet of Islam. Shariati takes careful note of this: she replaces a son as the bearer of the family name and history, the one who would uphold the ancestral values, and who would provide the ultimate link between the prophecy and *al-Mahdî*. While Muhammad would make known the revelation of God, his daughter would bear the responsibility of mirroring within herself the newly created revolutionary values of Islam.
3. The development of thought around 'Alî: as he assumes a central role, his wife is automatically elevated to a special status.
4. The rise of the 'Karbalâ' consciousness' as a central tenet of Shî'a theology and piety.
5. An examination of Maryam in the Qur'anic texts: what is posited of her must also be posited of the greater Fâtima, in terms of God's particular blessings and gifts.
6. The development of Shî'a theology, in three particular categories: the first is the suffering of the weak. The 'weak' are the 'people of the house', who were usurped of their rightful position. In this, Fâtima supplies a powerful example of suffering: its inevitability and its redemptive quality. The Imâms, descendents of Fâtima and appointed by God, are not those who have prestige, but those

whom the world considers ineffectual, those rejected, scorned and maltreated, those whose very weakness is an integral part of their status. The second theological category is the sinlessness of the *ma'sûmîn*, the pure ones, the majority of whom are sprung from the loins of Fâtima. The third category is the powerful intercessory prerogatives given by God to these pure ones, prerogatives which are the reward for all their suffering and weakness, and which therefore pertain to their status with God.

Ultimately, all of these factors color and influence the person and standing of Fâtima, and it is within these factors and theological categories that her life must be read and comprehended. Rather than being colorless or shadowy, her life becomes, for the believer, multihued. Following the caution issued by Ayoub and quoted at the very start of this work, in any reading of her life,

“It will not do...to limit ourselves to the bare facts as we see them...nor can we...take all traditions to be factual data. We must, however, choose our facts, often including those facts which, while to us they do not seem historically valid, were nonetheless considered as such by the community.”⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁹ Ayoub, M. *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*: 137.

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